

THE OUT OF SCHOOL LITERACY PRACTICES AND SEMIOTIC RESOURCES OF TWO GRADE 4 BOYS WHO EXCEL AT CREATIVE WRITING

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award of the degree of Master of Education.

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or words, of other people have been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Signed by candidate

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ABSTRACT

Previous socio-cultural research has shown the importance of creative writing and that children's creative writing is fuelled by their interests. It is believed that reading and writing is intimately connected and that those who can read well should be able to write well and vice versa. However, teachers have argued that those who do read tend to fill their writing with elements of popular culture, and those who read extensively aren't all capable of producing quality fictional writing either, as the skills and knowledge which they develop from reading don't necessarily translate into their writing. Through my teaching experiences I discovered a general negativity amongst South African teachers towards creative writing. Furthermore, the South African curriculum seems to provide little support for the advancement in creative writing as well.

As a result I became interested in two of my learners, both boys, who excel at creative writing. Their narratives are rich in detail, contain exciting plots, and are generally entertaining and engaging reads. Both boys are avid readers as well.

I questioned what contributed to their ability to produce excellent narratives as reading could not be the only factor. As I was aware of their in-school practices I decided it would be beneficial to examine their out of school literacy practices and semiotic resources and whether they affect or contribute towards their creative writing. I developed a case study based on home visits, interviews and collecting artefacts.

I discovered that family social practices underpin many of the out of school literacy practices and that reading, drawing and play featured as contributing practices towards their creative writing. Furthermore through Bakhtin's notion of appropriation and Kristeva's notion of intertextuality, I analysed how popular culture featured prominently in the boy's writing as a means of expressing not only their own individual interests, but as a resource for identity work, representing the ways in which they see themselves in their official world as well.

This research hopes to encourage further research into children's creative writing in order to change the way in which writing is viewed in the South African curriculum and to challenge teacher's perceptions on what constitutes "good" creative writing among primary school children.

DEDICATION

For all those teachers who are as passionate about creative writing as I am.

“Creativity is intelligence having fun” –Albert Einstein

“Think left and think right and think low and think high.

Oh the thinks you can think up if only you try!” –Dr Seuss

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	
DEDICATION	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE	6
1.1. Research Problem.....	6
1.2. Aim of Study.....	9
1.3. Chapter Outline.....	9
2. CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1. Introduction.....	11
2.2. Theoretical Framework.....	11
2.2.1. Sociocultural Perspective.....	11
2.2.2. New Literacy Studies (NLS).....	13
2.2.3. Appropriation and Intertextuality.....	14
2.3. Literature Review.....	16
2.3.1. Out of School Literacy Practices.....	16
2.3.1.1. Family Social Practices.....	17
2.3.1.2. Shared Book Reading.....	19
2.3.2. Semiotic Resources.....	21
2.3.2.1. Drawing.....	21
2.3.2.2. Fantasy Play.....	23
2.3.3. Creative Writing and Popular Culture.....	24
2.3.4. Creative Writing and Identity.....	25
2.4. Conclusion.....	26
3. CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	27
3.1. Introduction.....	27
3.2. Research Design.....	27
3.3. Participants.....	27
3.3.1. David.....	28
3.3.2. Luke.....	29

3.4.	Process of Investigation.....	29
3.5.	Data Collection.....	30
3.6.	Data Analysis.....	33
3.7.	Conclusion.....	34
4.	CHAPTER FOUR: FAMILY SOCIAL PRACTICES.....	35
4.1.	Introduction.....	35
4.2.	Out of School Literacy Practices.....	36
4.2.1.	Book Reading.....	36
4.2.1.1.	Reading Independently.....	37
4.2.1.2.	Bedtime reading aloud routine.....	39
4.2.2.	Drawing.....	45
4.2.3.	Fantasy Play.....	48
4.3.	Conclusion.....	54
5.	CHAPTER FIVE: APPROPRIATION AND CREATIVE WRITING.....	56
5.1.	Introduction.....	56
5.1.1.	Appropriating popular culture: popular culture texts and media in narrative worlds.....	57
5.1.2.	David's narrative writing: appropriating characters.....	58
5.1.3.	Luke's narrative writing: appropriating theme.....	69
5.2.	Conclusion.....	75
6.	CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION.....	79
6.1.	Overview of the study.....	79
6.2.	Reflections on the study.....	79
6.2.1.	Family literacy practices.....	79
6.2.2.	The use of popular culture within children's creative writing.....	80
6.3.	Limitations of my study.....	82
6.4.	Recommendations for further research.....	82
	APPENDICES.....	83
	APPENDIX 1: "Six traits of writing" rubric.....	83
	APPENDIX 2: Parent's Questionnaire.....	85

APPENDIX 3: Data table showing David and Luke’s out of school literacy practices and semiotic resources.....	87
APPENDIX 4: David’s library record.....	89
APPENDIX 5: Luke’s library record.....	90
APPENDIX 6: David’s unedited narrative “ <i>Sea Farers</i> ”	91
APPENDIX 7: David’s unedited narrative “ <i>One Big Hour Glass</i> ”	93
APPENDIX 8: Luke’s unedited narrative “ <i>The Battle of the Elements</i> ”	94
APPENDIX 9: Luke’s unedited narrative “ <i>The Escape</i> ”	102
REFERENCES.....	103

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

1.1. Research Problem

I have always been an avid reader. From the time I was young I can recall devouring any book I could get my hands on. As I grew older, I became more interested in specific genres, mainly fictional stories which contained elements of adventure, fantasy and romance. Along with reading I enjoy writing creative stories as well. I am aware that the reason why I enjoy writing is because my reading fuels my desire to create my own fantasy worlds. Thus creative writing became a passion for me and as I began my Foundation Phase teaching degree in 2005, I knew that I would enjoy teaching this area within the Literacy curriculum.

However, throughout my eight years of teaching, I have met countless teachers who do not share my passion towards creative writing. Usually when creative writing is mentioned, there is a collective moan amongst the teachers; their main reasons being that they do not enjoy marking children's compositions as they find the process subjective, and feel that the writing lacks originality and creativity, containing poor plots and characters. Teachers often say they would prefer focusing on grammatical features within the children's writing, rather than their children's ability to produce an engaging piece of fictional work.

Furthermore, it is a common belief amongst teachers and researchers that children who read well are able to write well. Stotsky's research (1983) has shown that better writers tend to read more than poorer writers, and that better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers. Further research investigating how reading and writing are used to communicate and conceptualise thought and ideas provides evidence that children's writing is heavily influenced by their reading experiences (Flihan & Langer, 2000; Hirvela, 2004; Tierney & Pearson, 1983). However, teachers have argued that those who do read tend to fill their writing with elements of popular culture, and those who read extensively, aren't all capable of producing quality fictional writing either, as the skills and knowledge which they develop from reading don't necessarily translate into their writing.

Little research has been done on creative writing in South African schools, as most literacy research seems to focus on reading, or the link between reading and writing (Dornbrack & Dixon, 2014: 1; Dixon, 2007). The same can be said with regards to the emphasis in the South

African curriculum (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements) as creative writing is only mentioned in relation to grammatical skills, while reading is explored and explained at length both in the lower and higher grades (Department of Basic Education, 2011a; Department of Basic Education, 2011b, Mendelowitz, 2014: 165). Mendelowitz argues that the severe lack of research on creative writing is in itself “a significant reflection of South Africa’s educational discourse, curriculum trends and the marginal position of creative writing within the educational landscape” (2014:165).

But what is creative writing? Creative writing is widely seen as a form of expression, which draws directly from the imagination to convey meaning (Mendelowitz, 2014: 166; Vygotsky, 2004: 9). This is in contrast to analytic or pragmatic forms of writing. Now as a qualified primary school teacher, I thoroughly enjoy reading children’s compositions and I see the importance of creative writing and feel that it is a necessary area within the curriculum which should be taken more seriously; it has the potential to allow learners to express and develop their ideas in a fun, engaging and imaginative manner, while developing their writing abilities. Many learners become riveted when creating their stories as these can allow them to use their imagination in ways that broaden their worlds and possibilities within it. Furthermore, since there is no “right answer” with creativity there is more freedom than in reading comprehension or non-fiction writing. Creative writing is about exploration, discovery and allows its writer to see the world from different viewpoints (Doyle, 2010).

Being able to think creatively has cognitive benefits as well. Research, largely developed from a Vygotskian viewpoint, has shown that the imagination is closely linked to higher order thinking skills, as learners often need to think outside of the box and engage in problem-solving (Mendelowitz, 2014:166; Vygotsky, 2004). For example, if a child writes a story where a conflict occurs, s/he needs to determine how to resolve the conflict in a logical manner that would convince the readers of its probability. Thus, it takes a higher order thinking ability to develop a creative story that encapsulates both imagination and a logical flow of events.

With the positive attributes towards creative writing on the one hand, and the negativity expressed by many teachers towards it on the other, I became interested in two of my Grade 3 learners, David and Luke. Both David and Luke¹ are fluent readers and they have excellent

¹ All names are pseudonyms to protect the identities of schools and participants

reading comprehension skills, usually obtaining full marks for their formative and summative assessments. When they were in Grade 3 both learners would choose to spend most of their free time in class reading novels that they either obtained from the school library or brought from home. They were both interested in the same genres (adventure and fantasy) and preferred to write adventure stories during free-writing activities. So there was not much of a distinction between them in terms of their observed interests and school-based reading skills.

David and Luke were both top performers for creative writing in the class. Their creative writing was assessed using the 'six traits of writing'²² which is an assessment tool designed on the basis that successful creative writing should have six essential characteristics (Kozlow, 2005). Both David and Luke excelled in each criteria. Their creative writing was usually rich with detail, contained an interesting and riveting plot, and captured the readers' attention from their opening paragraph. The only noticeable difference between their writing was in relation to language structure, as Luke was able to spell and punctuate his work more accurately than David.

David and Luke are both keen readers yet their reading ability cannot be the only reason why they excel at writing creatively. As mentioned before there are many learners who can read extensively but they do not share their abilities in being able to compose quality creative writing. As I was already aware of the boys' schooled practices with regards to their writing, I felt it would be beneficial to determine what occurs out of school, such as in their homes, to get a clearer picture and understanding of what practices or semiotic resources (Van Leeuwen, 2005) affect or contribute towards their creative writing. This knowledge could be beneficial towards assisting other learners in developing their writing abilities and their teachers who are in the position to inspire them to write. Comber and Kamler (2004) have shown that home visits by teachers are crucial in understanding children and their families as most research on children tends to take place in their classrooms and school environments. However, visiting their learners' homes allows teacher-researchers to see their participants as very different pedagogical subjects than previously (Comber and Kamler, 2004).

²² See appendix 1 for an example of the "six traits of writing" rubric

1.2 Aim of the study

Informed by the sociocultural perspective on literacy (which foregrounds learners as social beings with interests that are embedded in their social worlds), and the New Literacy studies (which focuses on context-embedded literacy practices and events), my research aims to explore the out of school literacy practices and semiotic resources of these two children and analyse whether and/or how these practices and resources are contributing towards their creative writing. A social practice understanding of literacy can support teachers in the classroom, enabling them to develop their understanding of children's composition practices in their creative writing.

This leads to my research questions.

1. What are the out of school literacy practices and semiotic resources of two Grade 4 boys who both excel at creative writing?
2. What is the relationship between these practices and resources and the creative writing which the children produce?

I answer these questions by conducting a case study of the out of school literacy practices and semiotic resources of two boys when they were in Grade 4

1.3. Chapter Outline

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I present the sociocultural perspective on literacy and the New Literacy Studies as the theoretical foundations of my study. I define the concepts of 'appropriation' (Bakhtin) and 'intertextuality' (Kristeva) and present empirical research on children's use of out of school literacy practices and their semiotic resources.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I discuss the case study by addressing my selected participants, the methods of data collection and the analysis of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR: FAMILY SOCIAL PRACTICES

This chapter is the first of two chapters that present the findings from my study. I focus on the out of school literacy practices and semiotic resources of my participants. An analysis of these practices showed how they are intertwined with family social practices and what is considered important within the family unit. These are: the shared bedtime story routine, drawing, and engaging in fantasy play.

CHAPTER FIVE: POPULAR CULTURE AND CREATIVE WRITING

This chapter explores how popular culture is used as a resource within children's creative writing. I analyse this by using Bakhtin's notion of appropriation and Kristeva's notion of intertextuality. This chapter shows how children draw on popular culture to develop their identities as writers, and as a resource to share the ways in which they see their own worlds.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

In this chapter I reflect on the findings and limitations of the study, provide recommendations for further research, and explore implications for teachers of writing.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

For the purpose of this study, two sets of theoretical resources will be used: firstly, a sociocultural perspective that draws on New Literacy studies, and sees literacy, or literacies as context embedded social practices; and secondly Bakhtin's notion of appropriation and Kristeva's notion of intertextuality which provides a framework for analysing children's use of diverse resources in their narrative writing.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Sociocultural Perspective

Dantas (1998:11) defines a sociocultural perspective as:

an inclusive term to refer to a body of research on learning and literacy learning that has been characterized as sociocultural theory, sociocognitive theory, and social construction perspective as well as particular studies that locate learning and literacy learning within a larger social and political context.

These theoretical frameworks have been described under one term because of their common focus on literacy learning as a sociocultural activity or process that is situated and constituted within social and cultural events or practices.

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory is based on the view that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. According to Jordan et al (2009:59), culture and social communities shape the manner in which individuals perceive, interpret and attach meanings to their experiences. The child's interactions with others serve to mediate between the child and the world which he or she is to learn about, and so understanding learning depends upon understanding the particular types of interactions, which serve to foster it. This notion is best represented in Vygotsky's well known "genetic law of development" (Daniels, 1996:5).

According to Dantas (1998:11), the work of Vygotsky on the social origins of individual development, and the implications of his theory for educational research and practices on classroom learning and teaching have fostered the formulation of a range of interpretations and applications of sociocultural approaches to literacy learning and development (e.g. John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Moll, 1991; Dixon-Krauss, 1996). It reconceptualises the nature of literacy learning and/ or instruction as social rather than individual.

In terms of literacy learning, the environment or communities in which the children live will shape their oral language ability and their prior knowledge. Children bring to the classroom experiences of different speech genres, and in their texts may draw on varied social language use learned from the communities in which they live (Dantas, 1998:13). Thus from the sociocultural viewpoint there are many ways of being literate. Dyson (1989, 1992) as cited by Flihan & Langer (2000) would agree as she found that children's literacy development was directly "linked to the social practices that surrounded them, that is, to their discovery of literacy's rich relevance to their present interactions with friends and to their reflections on their experiences" (1989, p. 276). Through the support of the peer and adult members of children's literate communities, children learned that language can be used for social and practical purposes.

Researchers such as Dyson (1993:18) and Mamabolo and Stein (2005: 38) argue that teachers need to take into account sociocultural differences in family and community practices of written and oral language, and make the cultural bridge between the home and school culture. In their view, successful literacy learning environments support the language and learning practices that children bring to school and connect them with the school's standard form of literacy. Seeing learners as having a rich cultural knowledge, which can be used to provide meaningful literacy-related activities in order to enhance their oral, reading and writing skills, they argue for teachers to engage with the learner's diversity. The classroom is seen as a complex social space where the learner's multiple social worlds *intersect and interconnect*: the school world, the peer world, and their home world (Dyson, 1993: 2). Each social world encapsulates its own languages, norms, and resources, which the learners draw on simultaneously and express through their oral and written texts.

2.2.2 New Literacy Studies (NLS)

One of the founders of New Literacy Studies (NLS), Brian Street (1984; 1995; 2003:77) developed a distinction between two models of literacy: the autonomous and the ideological models. The autonomous model views literacy as the development of decontextualised, universal skills that all people should acquire in order to read or write, usually during formal schooling. In this view, literacy can be studied separately from its social context (Street, 2003:77; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Prinsloo & Baynham, 2013: xxviii). In the ideological model, literacy is viewed as a context embedded social practice that changes in different contexts and with different practices. From an ideological perspective, it is important that an ethnographic approach is used to study literacy and the understanding of specific literacy issues and problems within social contexts (Street, 2003:77; Herman, 2011:6; Prinsloo & Baynham, 2013: xxviii). NLS arose from the ideological model.

Central to NLS is the distinction between literacy events and literacy practices. The term *literacy event* was created by Shirley Brice Heath to refer to any situations in which people engage with reading or writing (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Street, 1995: 78). Literacy events are “the occasions in which written language was integral to the nature of participant’s interactions and their interpretive processes and strategies” (Prinsloo & Baynham, 2013: xxviii). An event is identifiable through its social activity, drawing attention to the social and variable nature of particular acts or uses of writing and reading. While literacy events refer to distinct situations, or instances involving the use of literacy and texts, *literacy practices* refer to the larger patterns of activity in different contexts and domains that are created through the events (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Street, 1995: 78). For Barton and Hamilton (1998) “literacy practices are the general cultural ways which people draw upon literacy in their lives. In the simplest sense, literacy practices are what people do with literacy” (as cited by Prinsloo & Baynham, 2013: xxi). Thus while literacy events are treated as discrete, observable happenings, practices are abstract, enduring, and not wholly observable (Brandt and Clinton, 2002:342). Thus, an example of a literacy event can be composing a letter about a particular holiday experience within the broader literacy practice of letter writing.

Brandt and Clinton (2002) have critiqued what they have called the NLS’ over-emphasis on ‘the local’. Recent research has shown that NLS should not see the local context as the only relevant context for understanding literacy practices and events. They argue that NLS should

adopt a translocal and transcontextual perspective: Local literacies also draw from and feed into literacy practices from other contexts, and thus they are only local to a certain extent. This is evident in middle class children's literacy practices in the USA and UK which are heavily influenced by global and local popular cultures: television and film characters, comic books, narratives, and gaming (Marsh, 2005, 2008, 2011). Furthermore literacy practices are shaped not only by their immediate, observable physical and social world, but also by their virtual worlds, due to the dramatic explosion of digital, electronic communication. Television, computers, gaming, phones, tablets and other devices linked to the Internet and using email, websites, *Skype*, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *YouTube* and other communication and writing resources, can connect people of all backgrounds throughout the world, thus connecting across different 'local' contexts (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2013: xxiv). Consequently, literacy should be seen as a global and local social practice, not least due to the dramatic increase in global interactivity (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). However, it is important to note the limits of this as people from different socio-economic backgrounds will have differential and unequal access to internet connectivity and opportunities for global interactivity.

2.2.3. Appropriation and Intertextuality

Bakhtin's notion of *appropriation* is useful to identify which global influences are apparent in children's literacy practices. Appropriation is used to describe the process by which we respond to and transform the utterances of others and, in turn, use them for our own purposes. Bakhtin argues that our words are always someone else's words first; and these words sound with the intonations and evaluations of others who have used them before, and from whom we learned them (Lensmire & Beals, 1994; Irvine, 2004). For Bakhtin, the appropriation of others' speech and writing is much more than simple repetition or imitation; the speaker/writer uses language specifically in order to communicate what they need to in their specific situation:

The unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others' utterances. This experience can be characterized to some degree as the process of assimilation more or less creative - of others' words (and not the words of a language). Our speech, that is, all our utterances (including creative works), is filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of "our-own-ness," varying degrees of awareness and

attachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate. (Bakhtin, 1986: 89)

Bakhtin emphasised the relation between an author and his or her work, the work and its readers, and the relation of all three to the social and historical forces that surround them (Simandan, 2010). As mentioned before, cultural practices have norms. Children, according to Bakhtin (1986), learn these norms by borrowing and revoicing words from others whose voices they have heard in similar situations. Thus, all acts of speaking and writing bear the traces of the previous contexts in which the words and images have circulated.

Drawing on Bakhtin's work, Kristeva introduced the concept of "intertextuality", capturing the way in which texts are related to and influenced by one another, orally, visually and in written texts. Bock & Mheta (2013: 544) explain intertextuality as "how particular wordings or images are used and reused across different communicative contexts and how meanings evolve and assume different connotations as messages move over time and space." It is believed that a text cannot exist as a "self-contained whole" (Lanir, 2013) as a text is formed by the repetition and transformation of elements of other texts. Thus, the communication between author and reader is always paired with an intertextual relation between words and their prior existence in past texts. As Kristeva stated, "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations, any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (1980:66). For example, during one of my lessons, I mentioned to my learners that they should try to use more descriptive verbs in their writing and I gave the example "hesitated". Sure enough, in the next writing activity most of the learners included the word "hesitated" within their writing. Simandan (2010) points out that intertextuality is not exclusively related to written communication- it has been adapted by critics of non-literary art forms to incorporate imagery, music, architecture, photography and even film.

Bakhtin's notion of appropriation and Kristeva's notion of intertextuality are especially important for my study as they point to the diversity and complexity of language use and how socially connected and constructed it is. Thus, these concepts will be used as theoretical tools in analysing the semiotic resources learners are drawing on in their creative writing, including from the popular culture and social world around them.

2.3. Literature Review

2.3.1 Out of school literacy practices

NLS has shown that schools are just one space where literacy practices occur. Out of school literacy practices have been defined as practices which are not entirely infused with literacy pedagogy (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). Identifying practices has been a focus of literacy studies research over many years and several studies have shown the connection, as well as the gap between, in school and out of school practices (Hull & Schultz, 2001, 2002, 2008). Out of school literacy practices are not just limited to spaces that occur at home as they can take place within communities and on street corners. In other words, they can carry across diverse spaces at any given time and move from one space into the other, thus in school and out of school literacies should not be seen as a dichotomy (Herman, 2011: 13; Hull & Schultz, 2001:577; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). For the purpose of this study, the notion of school and home being linked is important as I argue that observing out of school practices (whether at home or in other spaces) will make it possible to make better sense of children's literacy practices in school settings, otherwise termed as 'schooled literacy' (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012).

According to Pahl & Rowsell (2012) understanding literacy practices in the homes of children in our classrooms requires going beyond the learners' individual knowledge into others' lives. Homes carry a wealth of knowledge, memories, materials and tools (artefacts, and in the case of wealthier homes digital equipment such as video games, cameras, computers) that can account for what learner's know and contribute to their literacy practices. It is also important to take into account the emerging literacy practices of young children as these practices have contributed to their literacy development, and as many teachers will concur, many of these practices are still continued by children through their schooling years e.g. drawing, and fantasy play.

Emergent Literacy (a term first coined by Clay, 1966) has shown us that children do not become literate after mastering a series of readiness skills or through careful instruction in discrete skills, but rather that in literate cultures, literacy begins from birth, with much of the learning taking place in the home, and that it can be developmental in nature (Sulzby, 1985,

1994; Teale, 1991). Literacy development begins with children and their parents, caregivers and families talking together, reading, playing, singing, drawing and observing the world around them. These social processes, along with others depending on the types of families and their backgrounds, are deeply embedded and constructed within family life.

Aligned with NLS, emergent literacy views literacy as, a “set of cultural practices situated in sociocultural contexts defined by members of a group through their actions with, through and about language” (Cairney, 2002). Literacy can only be understood by understanding what it means to be literate to the groups (families and communities) in which it occurs. Families and communities construct particular ways of literate thinking and behaving, and value specific types of literacy (Spedding & al, 2007; Volk and de Acosta, 2003). Family literacy practices are largely seen as being incidental, as the families are not purposefully engaging in literacy practices to aid literacy development, but are engaging in naturally occurring practices during their family life. The degree to which literacy can be embedded in the social processes of family life is well documented in Denny Taylor’s classic research on “family literacy” (1983).

2.3.1.1 Family Literacy

There are many definitions of ‘family’ in “family literacy” as families are complex. The boundary of the traditional family structure needs to be expanded considering the ways in which families have changed (two-parent families, single parent families, blended families, extended families, etc.) For the purpose of this study, the term “family” is taken from the United Kingdom National Literacy Trust revised by McCoy & Cole (2011:12) as it encompasses and considers the changing nature of society:

In the context of family literacy, it is essential to define family in the most inclusive sense to encompass significant others and extended family and community members whenever relevant. Moreover, it is important to take into account two fundamental and complementary issues... 1) Family is defined differently by different cultures; 2) In most cultures, adult family members are the primary models for their children. For the National Literacy Trust, the term parent reflects a broad and inclusive definition of family and is used to describe all kinds of carers, including biological parents, step-parents, grandparents, foster parents, siblings and other caregivers.

The term “family literacy” was first established by Taylor in a 1983 study that explored how the family serves to support the development of literacy in children. It refers to the many

ways that parents, family and community members use literacy at home and in their communities, and refers to all literacy activities that take place within the family, not just school-like activities. Taylor (1983:xii) states the reason why she began this research:

I became uncomfortably conscious that we were creating learning environments for children where reading and writing were presented as decontextualized language skills largely unconnected to reading and writing in everyday life

Taylor's three year comprehensive study involved six middle class families and she documented how the young children's early attempts at reading and writing occurred naturally during the routines of daily living, such as writing lists, letters, cards and notes, reading the newspaper and daily chores, and storybook reading. Taylor concluded that these parents did not deliberately set out to teach their children how to be literate (1983:55). Rather, by encouraging their children to participate in different literacy practices and engaging as a family in different literacy events, early literacy development followed and was supported.

Literacy can only be understood by understanding what it means to be literate in the social groups (e.g. families and communities) in which it occurs. Such groups, construct particular ways of literate thinking and behaving, and value specific types of literacy (Spedding et al, 2007; Volk & de Acosta, 2003). This ranges amongst cultures and social classes. Stein and Slonimsky (2006) conducted a study of literacy practices in three socio-economically, educationally and linguistically diverse homes in South Africa. Their findings showed how adult family members spend quality time socialising their young children into what counts as "good reading practices" in their household and how the identities of the children as 'readers' and 'subjects' are differently constituted (2006: 118). They demonstrate how the literacy practices shifted radically from one family to the next as the children and adults drew on a range of resources when interacting with multimodal texts. During this process they observed that children were not only socialised into becoming literate in particular ways that are shaped by socially and culturally established conventions, but also into developing particular future orientations and aspirations in the "real" world (2006: 143). These future aspirations are largely linked to the resources to which the children have access: their parent's education, the amount of time that parent's engage in literacy practices with their children, their funds of knowledge and resources, as well as the resources that are available through their

communities and schools. A child from a poorer background would have a limited access to resources compared with a child from a wealthier background as “their pathways to realising their potential are more assured because their families have multiple resources and are more practiced in navigating these nodes and pathways” (Stein and Slonimsky, 2006:145).

Stein and Slonimsky give the example of a girl named Margot who is drawing a picture of a “big house with a garden” that she would like to buy and who mentions in a conversation with her aunt that her mother can pay for it with her bank card because her mother “gets lots of money from her card” (2006:141). The authors point out that in this case, Margot, through her conversation with an adult member, is learning how to access, navigate, and become a member of a ruling class (2006: 143). This is in sharp contrast to Dineo, one of the other participants, whose parents are uneducated, unemployed and living on a child grant. She isn’t likely to engage in such conversations with her aunt. Taylor (1997: 4) mentions how it is important to recognise and honour not only the diversity and richness of literacies that exist within families but also the communities and cultures of which they are a part. This is because children learn literacy because it’s all around them. However because their learning occurs through authentic, social experiences which are situated in their daily lives, such as in Prinsloo’s study of children in Kwezi Park (Prinsloo, 2004), they will learn different literacy practices.

2.3.1.2. Shared book reading

Shared book reading, particularly as a bedtime shared reading routine between the parent and child, has emerged as a particularly important ritual within out of school literacy practices and family literacy research amongst middle-class families. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998: 848) remark that the shared story book reading “speaks of love, the importance of the family unit, and of parental commitment to a child’s future.” A great deal of research has been done on shared book reading and its importance as, not only an emerging literacy practice, but a predictor for children’s future success in schools as it aids literacy development. There are many benefits of shared reading, with the most common reported being language growth, reading achievement and writing, the enhancement of children's language comprehension and expressive language skills, listening and speaking skills, later enjoyment of books and

reading, and understanding different narrative structures (Duursma et al, 2008; Heath, 1982; Lonigan, 2004; Sulzby, 1985; Teale, 1986; Whitehurst, 1998).

Heath (1982:51) notes that bedtime shared reading is a major literacy practice which helps set patterns of behaviour and strategies which will recur throughout the life of mainstream, or middle-class, children and adults and that it is seen as “a natural way for parents to interact with their child at bedtime.” Reading aloud to young children, particularly in an engaging manner supports the relationship between the child and the parent. In addition it can promote a love of reading when embraced positively; ample research speaks of the children of parents who promote the view that reading is a valuable and worthwhile activity being motivated to read for pleasure (Baker & Scher, 2002; Duursma et al, 2008; McCoy & Cole, 2010; Yarosz, 2001).

However, shared book reading is not the only practice which aids literacy development. Several criticisms have been raised about the singular focus on book reading, mostly because it devalues the literacy practices of minority groups as this practice is not common across all cultures and social classes (Mui and Anderson, 2008; Pellegrini, 1991; Rank, 2004; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994). Taylor (1997:04) warns of this as well in her book *Many Families, Many Literacies*, where she discusses the multiple literacies which are apparent in different families who have different socioeconomic backgrounds:

No single, narrow definition of ‘family literacy’ can do justice to the richness and complexity of families, and the multiple literacies, including often unrecognised local literacies, that are a part of their everyday lives. The process of defining ‘family literacy’ cannot be left in the hands of those outside the families and communities that are affected by the decision-making process. The culture of the community and the experiences of the families who live in the community are an essential part of all literacy programmes.

As a result, recent developments in the theoretical construct of family literacy recommend using the plural form (i.e. family literacies), to acknowledge that families have different “ways with words” (Heath, 1983 as cited by McCoy & Cole, 2011: 16). This definition brings a sociocultural perspective to the study of family literacy, acknowledging that practices in the home can vary culturally or linguistically. Thus, according to McCoy & Cole (2011: 16) when considering literacy programmes, whether it be for the home or school environment, one cannot adopt a “one-size-fits-all” approach as there are risks of devaluing the varied social

systems in the very families and communities family literacy programmes are designed to help.

2.3.2. Semiotic Resources

Semiotic resource is a term used in social semiotics and other disciplines to refer to the means for meaning making. Van Leeuwen (2004) defines the term as follows:

Semiotic resources are the actions, materials and artifacts we use for communicative purposes, whether produced physiologically – for example, with our vocal apparatus, the muscles we use to make facial expressions and gestures – or technologically – for example, with pen and ink, or computer hardware and software – together with the ways in which these resources can be organised. Semiotic resources have a meaning potential, based on their past uses, and a set of affordances based on their possible uses, and these will be actualized in concrete social contexts where their use is subject to some form of semiotic regime (Van Leeuwen 2004:285).

Kress refers to a “multiplicity of ways in which children make meaning, and the multiplicity of modes, means, materials which they employ in doing so” (1997:96). He emphasises that these resources are constantly being transformed. This theoretical stance presents people as sign-makers who shape and combine semiotic resources to reflect their interests. Two key examples of semiotic resources have been identified in my study which reflect my participant’s interests: drawing, and fantasy play.

2.3.2.1 Drawing

From an NLS point of view, texts do not have uses independent of the social meanings and purposes that people construct (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) and all texts carry meaning. An example of such texts would be children’s drawings.

Kress states that drawings tend to be treated, with entirely good intentions, as an expression of the children’s feelings, desires, emotions, rather than as forms of communication (1997:9). However, visual images such as drawings should be seen as meaning-making through text. Recently, research on children’s drawings has moved from the psychological stance of describing children’s drawings in terms of developmental sequences, to considering children’s

drawings as expressions of meaning and understanding (Kennedy et al 2012). A number of researchers working from a meaning-making perspective emphasise that drawing provides a way for children to discuss and communicate meaning and to explore and play with identity (Kennedy et al, 2012). Exploring children's drawings is therefore an important strategy for understanding children's meaning-making (Hall, 2010 as cited by Kennedy et al, 2012).

Kress argues that all texts, including drawings, are multimodal with multimodality defined as the use of more than one communicative mode in a text e.g. visual images, written text, layout, sound and/or texture, has become an integral part of the semiotic landscape (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). This can be observed not only in newspapers, books and advertisements (paper based and electronic), but also in digital communication such as that using mobile phones and computers.

Children's drawings are largely seen as a pre-conventional writing strategy, as the development of drawing is important for the development of the written language. Thus most research on children's drawing derives from the emergent literacy paradigm, such as the work which has been taken from Kennedy et al (2012) and Makin & Diaz (2002). It seems that once children have begun conventional writing at school, drawing is seen as increasingly unimportant (Dixon, 2007). However, considering the multimodality of literacy practices, and that visual images are seen as a form of communication, surely more attention should be applied to these practices once children are in formal schooling. Hubbard (1989, 157) would concur and has commented that drawing should not just be seen as important for children who can't write fluently or as a rehearsal for real writing, but as a part of the serious business of meaning-making- drawings partner with words for communicating inner designs.

Christianakis (2011) has commented on the fact that most research involving drawing sees it as being a novice or infantile form of communication that children are expected to outgrow and replace with writing. She emphasises that the connection between writing development and drawing is well-established in early literacy research but there's hardly any research documenting the use of drawings in older children's texts (Christianakis, 2011: 29). However, her study involving fifth graders, who integrated drawing and writing in creative and sophisticated ways, showed that schools and curricula are placing limits on children's creativity and their development by placing exclusive emphasis on writing. She argues for more research to be done in the middle grades with regards to drawing and writing. Kress

commented in 1997 that communication is being less dominated by written language and that the world is relying less on just written language and moving more towards the visual forms (1997:6). In present day 2016 this is even more relevant. Visual imagery, like other modes of literacy, is encountered throughout our lives and is as significant as it conveys meaning. Children's drawing doesn't cease to exist once they enter school and become immersed in more conventional forms of literacy.

2.3.2.2. Fantasy Play

Research on play, again prominent within the emergent literacy field, has shown that fantasy play offers both social and cognitive advantages for children (Singer & al, 2006; Christie, 2006; Fromberg & Bergen, 2006). Fantasy play (or pretend play) is an integral part of a child's holistic development and provides children with important learning opportunities and life lessons that will enable them to be constructive members of society.

Children are constructing meaning through their play. For Vygotsky, play is seen as an opportunity for children to learn more about their world, to stretch to accommodate new ideas, and to foster their imaginations (Singer et al, 2006). It is a means of learning self-regulation, and rules for social interaction and social competence. The benefits towards private speech have been documented as well as children problem solving and making decisions during their play (Vygotsky, 1933). Research has shown the benefits of play in middle school children, especially for those who experience stress and anxiety (Singer et al, 2006). Being allowed to play affords these children with time to relax and regroup their emotions.

Vivian Paley has expressed that fantasy play is seen as "the glue that binds together all other pursuits including the early teaching of reading and writing skills" (as cited by Singer et al, 2006). Fantasy play contains cognitive components (oral language, phonemic awareness, print and background knowledge) that can be linked to literacy development and later literacy achievement through guidance from teachers and a literature rich play environment (Christie, 2006; Christie & Roskos, 2001).

Despite the extensive evidence promoting the value of fantasy play, Singer et al (2006) have reported that it has been de-emphasised while cognitive skills and achievement have moved to the forefront of early childhood in American schools. Singer et al (2006), and Fromberg & Bergen (2006) have argued that a whole child approach needs to be considered as cognitive development is only one aspect of human development: cognitive skills are important but they are also intertwined with the physical, social, and emotional systems of a human being (Singer et al, 2006). A child cannot learn to read and write if their emotional and physical needs are not met.

2.3.3 Creative Writing and Popular Culture

Much research has focused on a gender gap in children's reading. Boys' attitudes towards reading and writing, the amount of time they spend reading, and their achievement in literacy are frequently reported as poorer than those of girls (Spedding et al, 2007; Estyn, 2008; UK DoE, 2012; NLS, 2012). Researchers have identified a range of factors behind boys' 'underperformance', some of them being that teachers do not give children ownership of their writing, and a discrepancy between boys' reading preferences and the assigned writing topics in classrooms (Daly, 2003; Estyn, 2008; DfES, 2007). In summary, it has been found that in schools, boys are generally not writing, or allowed to write, about what they are interested in.

However, a learner's interests are a key resource when it comes to their creative writing. Literacy practices tend to be linked to and affected by the subject's "ruling passions", a term derived by Barton and Hamilton (1998: 83). These ruling passions enabled researchers to understand why literacy mattered to people and what they used literacy for as well as how they used it (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). In Barton and Hamilton's study, they worked with a man named Harry, who was involved in the Second World War. He read factual books based on authentic war stories every evening before bed, and went to the library to take out books on this subject as well. His favourite topics of discussions are war-related and he has written an article and stories based on his experiences as a soldier (1998: 84). It is clear that Harry's "ruling passion" influences his literacy practices.

For young learners, this idea of “ruling passions” plays a key role in what they produce in their creative writing. According to Vygotsky (2004: 40) the development of the child’s literary creativity immediately becomes easier and more successful when the child is encouraged to write on a topic that is intrinsically understandable to him and engages his emotions, and most of all, encourages him to express his interior world in words. It is found that very often a learner will write poorly because he has nothing he wants to write about (Vygotsky, 2004: 41). I have certainly seen this in my own classroom. When the learners have no experience from which to draw, they battle to write stories or rush through their work in order to finish. This is simply because the topic might not have any relevance in their life at that moment. This insight is essential for my study as it is evident that learners frequently do want to write about that which they are interested, what creates meaning in their life and produce better pieces of writing to which they are connected. So as a researcher, one has to look at what the learners’ “ruling passions” are and what resources they might draw from within their in and out of school practices.

Children’s ‘ruling passions’ should be evident in the appropriation and intertextuality evident in young children’s writing, as they draw on resources that are familiar and are of interest to them, within their different social worlds. Dyson (1992; 2003; 2010) explores this extensively in her work on how popular culture makes its way into children’s school learning and writing. Popular culture here includes songs, film, and games. According to Marsh (2006:160) research on popular culture has explored ways in which children recontextualise the ‘stuff’ of home and community and use popular texts to build bridges between official and unofficial worlds (the world which actually exists and the world which is created and explored). Popular culture is integral to children’s and young people’s engagement in a wide range of literacy experiences, many of which are mediated by new technologies, and is therefore a central part of their social practices outside of school. Children’s experiences with popular media emphasise that this is an integral aspect of their life and thus, shouldn’t be seen in a negative light (Dyson, 2003: 328).

2.3.4. Creative Writing and Identity

Several researchers have argued that a students' evolving sense of identity is central to literacy learning and writing (Ivanic, 1998; McKinney and Norton, 2008; Moje et al, 2009). This is evident in what children choose to read and write as it is integral to who they think they are (Moje et.al, 2009).

In a review of research on Literacy-and-identity, Moje et al show that studies pay close attention to "the roles of texts and literacy practices as tools or media for constructing, narrating, mediating, enacting, performing, enlisting, or exploring identities" (2009: 417). Literacy practices being social in nature has led many theorists to see that people's identities mediate and are mediated by the texts they read, write, and talk about (Moje. et al, 2009: 417).

Thus far more than conveying 'content', writing is also about the representation of self (Ivanic, 1998). Lensmire and Beals' (1994) study provides evidence for this as they witnessed how a young girl named Suzanne appropriated events from her favourite book and a popular song in her narrative writing to portray the way in which she sees not only the world in which she lives but her place within the world as well. Through the utterances of words and the way in which characters interacted with each other, Suzanne provided insights into her peer cultures and also what she believes in and values. To use their words, "Suzanne told us about herself as she told us a story..." (Lensmire & Beals, 1994:423). Thus, it can be seen that identity work can play a central role within literacy and especially within narrative writing.

2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the sociocultural perspective and the New Literacy Studies as the theoretical foundations of my study. I have also defined the key concepts of appropriation, intertextuality and semiotic resources, all of which I will examine in the texts produced by my participants. I have investigated empirical research on children's use of out of school literacy practices and semiotic resources, focusing on the importance of family literacy practises in which fantasy play and drawing are prominent, and the frequent and natural occurrence of popular culture and media in children's meaning-making and production of texts. The following chapter will detail my research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I discuss my choice of a qualitative case study as research design; the selection of participants, and the process of the investigation, including the data collection strategies. I end with outlining the methods used in the data analysis.

3.2. Research design

This research took the form of a qualitative case study. The main purpose of qualitative research is to describe and explain, and this is where my research study is aimed as I am examining the out of school literacy practices of my participants and exploring whether there is a relationship between these practices and their creative writing. A case study enables this as it is defined as “an in-depth analysis or exploration of a bounded phenomenon” with bounded meaning being limited according to place, time, and participant’s characteristics (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010: 344). In this case the ‘bounded phenomenon’ refers to the out of school literacy practices, including the creative writing, produced by two boys from affluent families.

There are many key features of qualitative research: a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of a particular social phenomenon rather than setting out to test hypotheses about it, a tendency to work primarily with “unstructured data”—that is, data that have not been coded at the point of data collection as a closed set of analytical categories, investigation of a small number of cases in detail, and the analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions (Reevers, Kuper & Hodge, 2003: 512).

I decided to use a small-scale case study as I wanted to focus in depth on only two participants. I chose a case study because it gave me the opportunity to conduct a detailed investigation of the out of school literacy practices and semiotic resources of my two participants. This enabled me to analyse the relationship between the boys’ literacy practices and their creative writing.

3.3. Participants

As I have specifically chosen two learners, my sampling is considered 'purposeful'. According to Maxwell (2008: 235) this is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information that they can provide. Furthermore, a sample can be purposefully selected to allow for the examination of cases that are critical for the theories that the study began with or that have subsequently been developed (Maxwell, 2008: 235).

I have named the two participants chosen as David and Luke. David and Luke are both boys who were in my class in Grade Three at the private school where I teach, in the year prior to my fieldwork. I became interested in these two learners when I noticed the similarities they possessed in their love for reading specific genres, their expertise in creative writing, and their mutual interest in similar popular cultures. I selected them as my participants in order to explore what might be contributing towards their creative writing ability that is not related directly to their school literacy pedagogy. Their gender is entirely coincidental, although given the stereotypes around boys not being highly proficient in or as interested in reading and writing for pleasure (Estyn, 2008), it is interesting that both participants are in fact boys.

During the year of my data collection (2015) the boys were in Grade Four and were both ten years old. They attend a private, mixed-gender, English-medium, middle to upper-class private school in the Western Cape where the school fees are R63 312 per annum. Both boys are a part of the same social circle of friends. Both boys would be considered as having affluent family backgrounds as their parents can afford to send them to a private school and have provided them with costly digital media: iPads, PlayStation and Xbox machines, and cell phones. Both boys also have access to other resources and tools which have contributed to their interests in varying literacy practices: they have access to a variety of text-types, computers, libraries, museums, and television. This access is common amongst affluent, and middle class families where socio-economic status (and what this status is able to provide) is linked to literacy development (Woolfolk: 2010; Gosh: 2013)

3.3.1 David

David is a very confident boy who has a lively personality; he is extremely popular and is usually considered the "class clown" in the classroom due to his sense of humour and

classroom antics. He has an excellent general knowledge and is usually found reading a book during free time in school or playing games that involve epic battles during break at school. David lives with his mother, Hilary, who works at a Public Relations firm where she is the Strategic Director. He has an older sister, Stacy, who is in high school and the oldest sibling is his brother, Matthew, who is studying at a university and lives near campus. David's parents got divorced shortly after he was born. His father remarried and immigrated to North America with his three half brothers (two of whom are twins and 16 months younger than David) and a younger sister in December 2014, a month before my research began.

3.3.2. Luke

Luke is a confident boy as well. He has a gentle demeanour and is described amongst his peers as very loyal and caring. He is known amongst his teachers as being extremely bright and he plays various musical instruments. Like David, most of his free time is spent reading a novel or engaging in discussions which are related to books he has read. Luke lives with his mother, Anne, who is a primary school English teacher, and his younger brother, Adam, who is 4yrs younger than him. His father, Gordon, is an Engineer and was lecturing overseas at the time of my data collection. Presently (November 2016) he has moved back to South Africa and is lecturing at a local University.

I decided to conduct this research when the boys were no longer in my class for a number of reasons. From a validity perspective, I thought it would be difficult to be their teacher and a researcher simultaneously, and I also did not want my other learners to question why only two learners in the class were selected as participants and not the rest of them as well. This being said, I feel that I am at an advantage having been their teacher in Grade 3. Both David and Luke were already comfortable being around me and I was also able to draw on my prior experiences in teaching them in order to select these two children who I deemed to be highly successful creative writers.

3.4. Process of Investigation

A broad outline of the research was given to both participants' parents. This was received with interest and enthusiasm, with a request that their children remain anonymous, including

within photographs. This was followed up with the signing of consent forms. The investigation was then explained to the Headmaster and the Intermediate Phase Head so that they would be aware that I was conducting interviews within the school property. A general overview was then given to both David and Luke who were really excited at the prospect of participating in the research.

3.5. Data Collection

Data collection included observation in home visits, interviews, collection of artefacts of current and emergent literacy practises of the children, archival records (their library records), photographs and a questionnaire for parents. Following is a summary of data collection strategies:

- Eight semi-structured interviews with each participant as follows:
 - Discussions were based on what they enjoyed doing when they were young- favourite activities, their favourite toys, books, films, etc. This was to get a sense of their past literacy practices and whether they still draw from any of these resources.
 - Discussions based on what they currently enjoy to get a sense of their current or possibly new literacy practices.
- A questionnaire sent to the participants' parents about their children's early childhood practices, and the parents' own thoughts about their children's creative writing (see Appendix 2)
- Home visits with each participant:
 - Three x two hour home visits with David
 - One three hour home visit and one two hour home visit with Luke
- Collection of documentation- I collected a creative writing piece the participants had been writing at home, and a piece of writing which was written at school for an assessment.
- Collection of archival records- I have obtained the participant's library records from the school library to see what books they had taken out to read at school and at home.

- Photographs- of their home life, books that they are reading, their drawings, and actual photographs of them that pertain to their literacy practices

The interviews with the learners were audio-recorded and took approximately 30-40 minutes, usually during second break at school. Break-time was chosen because the participants engage in many after school activities and it was difficult to see them after school. The interviews were conducted in my classroom which worked in my favour as it was a familiar space and made both Luke and David feel comfortable and open to my questions.

The interviews took place over a period of four months. During these interviews I took field notes and wrote down any incidences when David or Luke's body posture or facial expressions would change. All interviews and observations were then transcribed.

The following criteria were covered within the interviews:

- Their current literacy practices as pertaining to reading: what they enjoy reading, what they were reading at school and home, and what books they enjoyed when they were young
- Their creative writing- what stories they enjoy writing about, the characters and plot lines
- Their past writing activities: what stories they enjoyed writing from Grade 1-3
- Their current writing activities at home and at school
- Games they enjoyed playing when they were younger and games they currently enjoy
- Toys with which they played and toys they currently use
- Their views on their own writing ability and what they think their parents think about their abilities.

With regards to the home visits, it was evident from the first home visit that both David and Luke were comfortable having me in their personal space. All three home visits were approximately 2-3 hours long. The first home visit was conducted to get a sense of the family space, David's own personal spaces, and for him to share with me his favourite books, games, and toys. He also showed me past writings and drawings he had done and his 'dress up' costumes. During the second home visit David spoke extensively about his narrative which he was writing at home. The last home visit I used to collect photographs of David from when he

was young which were obtained from the family albums. The home visits with Luke were done similarly. Each home visit was approximately 2-3 hours long as well. I kept field notes during these visits and parts of the interviews were recorded. During these home visits I also collected examples of their writings and their drawings.

My data collection relied on multiple sources in order to enhance data credibility, and provide a holistic understanding of the boys' out of school literacy practices. According to Maxwell (2008: 236), qualitative studies generally rely on the integration of data from a variety of methods and sources of information, a general principle known as triangulation. This strategy reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method, and allows you to gain a better assessment of the validity and generality of the explanations that you develop (Maxwell, 2008: 236). Once collected, the data is then converged in the analysis. Baxter & Jack (2008) explain it as each source being one piece of a puzzle, adding strength to the findings.

The following conventions were used in transcribing the spoken data. All words spoken by the children are in italics:

Symbol	Indication
...	A short pause
(...)	A longer, noticeable pause
[...]	Words emitted as they don't have relevance for that section
(...??...)	Inaudible
(?)	Rise in intonation for a question
raises hand	A physical movement or gesture of the learner- not in italics
[avoids eye contact]	Gesture or movement of the learner of which he is not aware- not in italics
()	Additional information/comments from the transcriber- not in italics
Name:	The name of the speaker
//	Overlapping speech and/or interruptions
<u>Underlining</u>	Words which are stressed
<u>bOring</u>	Specific syllable that is stressed within a word
<u>Whole sentence underlined</u> <u>[voice]</u>	When the learner changes their tone of their voice or puts on a different voice.

3.6. Data Analysis

I began my analysis by studying each transcript and highlighting every instance where the children mentioned a specific literacy event, literacy practice, or the use of semiotic resources. I used these as the initial unit of analysis (Lenters, 2007), in order to develop an overview of the different out of school literacy practices. These were then recorded onto a table format (see Appendix 3) and I summarised the information which the children provided regarding these practices and resources. Within the table I also added specific comments which the children made that I deemed important. Using this table, a pattern emerged which allowed me to see which literacy practices and semiotic resources the children were engaging in, and which were directly linked to their creative writing.

A pattern emerged which showed that the children's out of school literacy practices were significantly linked to practices which were shared with their family such as the bedtime

reading routine, drawing together with adults, engaging in discussions with family members, and play (both alone and with siblings). From this pattern, chapter four developed which presents and analyses the family social practices of these two boys and how these have supported their creative writing.

The theoretical notions of 'appropriation' and 'intertextuality' were used as tools to identify and analyse which semiotic resources and literacy practices were evident in their writing. . For example, whether popular culture was evident, how and why it is being used, and what effect it had on their writing was analysed. From the transcripts it became apparent that the children enjoyed reading specific novels (the *Harry Potter* series, *Skull Duggery Pleasant* series, and *The Chronicles of Narnia* series), watching specific shows (*Avatar the Last Airbender*), and films (*The Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise)- all of which will be discussed in detail in Chapter five. In order to accurately analyse the appropriation and use of these popular cultural texts and semiotic resources, I read the novels that the children were reading when they wrote their stories, and watched the films they were watching. I was already familiar with some of these popular culture texts.

Using my knowledge of these texts and resources, I analysed the children's writing and traced every incidence where appropriation and intertextuality was apparent. This data was then transferred into a table format as well. From analysing the data within the table, and reading articles based on children's writing and appropriation, it became evident that both David and Luke were appropriating certain aspects of popular cultural texts and resources for their own purposes. This is examined in Chapter five.

3.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have given an overview of the general case study and the research design. I have introduced the participants of the study and how their relationship with me has added value to the study. The process of the investigation and the data collection was discussed in detail. I have also outlined the way in which I analysed the data, tracing emergent patterns and themes across the data, and analysing the specific resources the children used in their creative writing.

CHAPTER FOUR: FAMILY SOCIAL PRACTICES

...Children are encultured into many forms of literacy in their homes and communities before they even begin school. The accumulated ways of knowing and funds of knowledge of family members- their local literacies- are complexly structured and are intricately woven into their daily lives (Denny Taylor, 1997: 3).

4.1. Introduction

In 1983, Denny Taylor introduced the term *family literacy* to describe the ways in which literacy practices were embedded in the daily lives of the middle-class families with whom she worked. Based on her research, she concluded that these parents did not deliberately set out to teach their children literacy skills. Rather, by encouraging children to participate in different literacy activities, parents and other family members supported literacy development. Children are members of families, groups and communities who introduce them to distinct literacy practices through social interactions from the time they are born. As families are the first “teachers” who interact with children, their role in literacy development has been widely acknowledged as being instrumental. Thus, what occurs in the homes of families, the practices which are important to them, are crucial in determining what children are able to do with literacy.

In this chapter I will be discussing some of the family literacy practices which became visible during my interviews, observations, and home visits with both participants, David and Luke, and how these practices are significantly linked to and influenced by their family relationships, thus evolving from not just being out of school literacy practices but being identified as their *family social practices*. I will also be using statements³ that David’s mother, Hilary, and Luke’s mother, Anna, have made with regards to their children’s literacy practices. Most of these practices are largely studied from an emergent literacy perspective, though they continue to be performed and considered important to the children, contributing not only to their creativity and their narrative writing, but to the literacy practices which draw them together as a family unit.

³ Hilary and Anna were asked to answer a questionnaire so their comments are written responses. See Appendix 2.

4.2. Out of School Literacy Practices

In this section I will be discussing the main out of school literacy practices that were identified from my observations and interviews with Luke and David. These practices have been chosen because they have been directly linked to the boys' creative writing, and are seen as important literacy practices within their home environment. These practises are: book reading (both independently and as a shared reading practice), drawing, and fantasy play.

It must be noted that, even before my field research had begun, both David and Luke were in the process of writing their own creative stories at home. Without a doubt this is a crucial out of school literacy practice for my study as these writings have contributed significantly to my findings. However, this literacy practice will be examined in Chapter 5 where the boy's narrative writing will be analysed.

4.2.1. Book reading

Much research has focused on a gender gap in children's reading. Boys' attitudes towards reading and writing, the amount of time they spend reading, and their achievement in literacy are frequently reported as poorer than those of girls (Spedding & al, 2007; Estyn, 2008; UK DoE, 2012; NLS, 2012). David and Luke's literacy engagement however does not fit this profile. They are highly motivated and proficient readers and it was clear to me, even before my field research began, that both David and Luke have an incredible love for reading, especially fiction that contained elements of fantasy and adventure. During school breaktimes, they often could be found sitting in the library reading their latest library book, or choosing to read during their free time in class. At one point during the year, David and Luke began a "reading gang," which included a group of boys from my class. This group originated as they were all reading books from a series written under the same pen name (*Beast Quest* by David Blade). For months this group would sit in the library during break, sharing tales from the books and discussing their favourite scenes and titles. Thus, I expected that reading would emerge as an important literacy practice, as both an independent reading practice and as a shared reading practice with family members and friends.

4.2.1.1 Reading Independently

Both David and Luke enjoy reading independently for pleasure. As mentioned above, this was noticeable even at school where they were often seen reading novels, instead of engaging in outdoor play. At the time of my observations, David was reading the Harry Potter series⁴ and Luke was reading the Skulduggery Pleasant series⁵. As they are close friends, they would often talk to each other about the books they were reading. These books are usually borrowed from the school Library. The boys' school library records⁶ provide evidence of their shared love for the fantasy genre, and that the boys often borrowed similar books.

The children's love for reading (and the financial resources of their parents who can support this passion) is also evidenced in the drawers filled with books in their bedrooms and in the family rooms of their homes:



Figure 1: A shelf with some of Luke's books in his bedroom (on the left) and a shelf containing some of David's books which is in the family study (on the right).

⁴ The Harry Potter series is a series of extremely popular books about a boy who finds out that he is wizard and goes to a wizarding school to learn about magic; Ultimately he has to defeat the dark wizard, Voldemort.

⁵ Skulduggery Pleasant is a series of fantasy horror novels revolving around the adventures of a skull detective and a young girl who has special powers.

⁶ See Appendix 4 and 5 for a detailed list of both David and Luke's library records. Highlighted books are within the adventure/fantasy genre

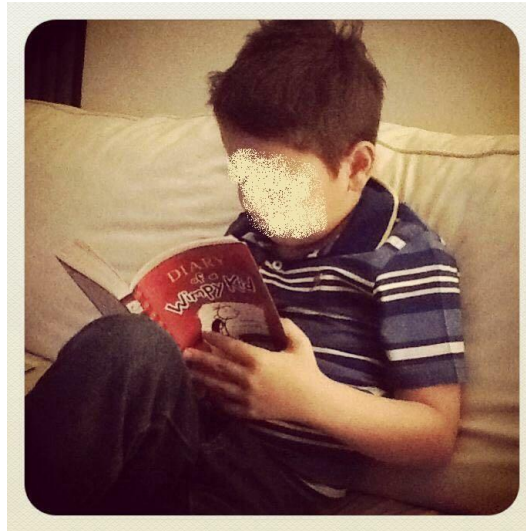


Figure 2: Luke (age 7) completely engrossed while reading his book during the holidays

David's mother read the Harry Potter series to him when he was younger (age 7 to 8). In discussions with Luke (whose mom is reading him the series as part of their bedtime routine), David has now chosen to read the Harry Potter series again. He claims that he is enjoying the books now because he feels that he is older and can appreciate them more. He also reports enjoying them because he feels even though the books deal with magic, the fictional characters are still realistic. During the period of my research he had read five out of the seven books, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* being the fifth book.

NA: *I thought you didn't like Harry Potter?*

David: *I didn't before but that's when my mom read them to me and that was ages ago. Now that I'm reading it on my own I really like it. I've gone through quite a few of them already.*

NA: *what do you like about it?*

David ... *erm... it's like.., like real life only at a different angle... set in a magical world... like the people aren't that different to how people normally are... they just have magic.*

Luke is reading the *Skulduggery Pleasant* series, explaining that he enjoys the mystery/horror/fantasy elements of the story as well as the continuation of a central storyline. He reports enjoying series as he becomes involved in the books and their characters so by continuing to read the series, he gets to know the characters more deeply and enjoy them for a longer period of time. During the period of my fieldwork (January 2015-September 2015) Luke had read seven books from the series:

Luke: *[...] I'm reading quite a lot of books though. Like I finished the 3rd Skulduggery Pleasant book and it hasn't even been three weeks since I read the first one.*

NA: *What are those books about?*

Luke: *It's a skeleton who came back from the dead and the... the story... the main character is the skeleton guy but the story is from this girl Stephanie's point of view but in the magic world [...] and then they like solve problems and there's other characters and stuff and their own Ministry of Magic like in Harry Potter*

NA: *Oh I see, so is Stephanie the protagonist of all the stories?*

Luke: *Yea*

NA: *So each book is a continuation of the story?*

Luke: *Yea, like how Harry Potter is, which is cool cos like... the people develop and stuff...*

NA: *How many books are there?*

Luke: *Lots! Like 9 or 10!*

NA: *How did you find out about these books?*

Luke: *Mrs De Sousa told me (the librarian at school) and some of the other kids were reading them.*

One can see from Luke and David's responses their awareness that they are proficient readers who enjoy this literacy practice as they both have commented on how many books they have read. Also, both boys are reading books from the fantasy genre and are reading a series.

4.2.1.2 Bedtime reading aloud routine

In Heath's (1982:51) oft cited research on the bedtime story practice, she notes that it is a major literacy practice which helps set patterns of behaviour and strategies which will recur throughout the life of mainstream or middle class children and adults and that it is seen as "a natural way for parents to interact with their child at bedtime." In both David and Luke's home, there is a nightly routine of their mothers reading to them before bedtime. This literacy practice has occurred from the time they can remember and both boys have expressed that they enjoy and look forward to this daily event. Both children have kept their favourite books that their mothers read to them from when they were young and remember specific occurrences of their mothers reading the books to them. This shows how special the books are to them and the significance of the bedtime reading routine for them.



Figure 3: David's favourite childhood picture books. *The baboon who went to the moon* and *Goodnight Gorilla* are chosen as his most important childhood books.

David reported that he particularly remembers his mother reading *The baboon who went to the moon* and *Goodnight Gorilla* because he would continuously ask her to read these two books to him when he was younger. He recalls that she would ask him questions about the books (who the characters are, to find specific words and details) and he enjoyed this aspect of the book reading as much as her reading the story because he could participate:

David: *I remember that I liked it because then I could talk about the book with her and it became sorta like... a game... and I liked that... it was fun looking for things... sorta like problem solving but with a book that you really like*

This is interesting for me as an educator, as Hilary's reading strategies that she is using to engage David in the reading are echoed in some pedagogical approaches where teachers demonstrate and apply the same skills to teach children how to read. Talking about the text including answering questions is an example of a "pattern of behaviour" that is repeated at school in continuity with interactions around books at home (Heath, 1982, 319). Heath points out that many parents emulate in their homes what they have themselves experienced, either in schools or in their own upbringing. This is also an example of how social and cognitive development has occurred in a social context through an interaction with a more competent other (Landry & Smith, 2006). Hilary is acting as the "knowledgeable other" and guiding David's learning which allows him to reach higher levels of learning. Landry & Smith (2006) have commented that through scaffolding children are more likely to engage and become more actively involved and parents encourage this behaviour.

This is one of the reasons why researchers encourage the bedtime reading routine as it aids reading development. However, Hilary has commented that reading to David from a young

age began not as a way to help build his vocabulary, or develop any particular skills, but as a routine that followed other naturally occurring family practices that took place on a daily basis. Thus, any development occurred incidentally:

Hilary: *It was a nice bed-time routine once he had had his bath and supper... There was no concerted strategy – reading was always just a fun way to end the day.*

Presently, David and Hilary are reading *Hamlyn Children's History of the World* as David has a passionate interest in history, which he reports is largely influenced by his mother who has told him about historical events from the time he was young. Every night they would read one chapter from the book and then discuss it before he would go to bed.

NA: *"History of the world". What are you enjoying reading in here?*

David: *I really like history so we are going through the book. My mom reads a story at a time*

NA: *What is it about history that you like so much?*

David: *The world makes more sense when you know about history... Like why people do things and stuff... Like I understand what's going on better and how things started.*



Figure 4: *Hamlyn Children's History of the World* sitting on David's bedside table

When David's mother is away, his maternal grandmother stays with him. During their bedtime routine they have been reading the Narnia series authored by C.S. Lewis. David considers this his favourite book series, and he is passionate about the characters and the plots. His choice

to dress up as one of the characters, Reepicheep⁷, during his schools' World Book Character Day⁸ provides evidence of his passion for the characters. He is rereading the series with his grandmother who David reports wishes to understand his passion for the series. During the period of my research, they had read up to the 4th book, *Silver Chair*.

NA: *Do you like that the characters are kids?*

David: *Ya, coz they're still learning.*

NA: *So you really love reading the Narnia books hey?*

David: *Yea they're my favourite. I've read them twice now.*

NA: *Twice?*

David: *well my mom read them to me first and now I am reading them again with my grandma coz she wants to read them as well.*

NA: *So she likes Narnia too?*

David: *...well...yea... and she wants to see why I like them so much*

During their bedtime routine, Luke is reading the *Harry Potter series* with his mom, who introduced the series to him. He began reading the series in Grade 3 and they are at present, his favourite books. He feels connected to the characters, several of whom he identifies and he loved discussing the books with me during our interviews. He dressed up as the titular character, Harry Potter, two years in a row for the schools World Book Character Day in Grade 3 and for the school's Literature Quiz ⁹ in Grades 3 and 4. During the period of my research he had read up to the 6th book, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*.

NA: *Why do you love the Harry Potter books so much?*

Luke: *Erm... well it's like... like... what's the word... it keeps you like at bay... like it... it has a lot of suspense so it keeps you in suspense... and I like the fact that it is good fantasy*

NA: *What's 'good fantasy?'*

Luke: *...like... the different story lines but they're all linked... and the way they describe things.... it makes you want to be in that world.*

NA: *Oh, I know that feeling! So what made you decide to read Harry Potter?*

Luke: *My mom. You know how she loves books... She usually chooses the best ones.*

NA: *True that. She told me you would love Harry Potter because she loved it. She started reading them with you hey?*

⁷ Reepicheep is a character from the Narnia series. He is a courageous mouse who has impressive fighting skills.

⁸ World Character Book Day is an international celebration of books. At David and Luke's school the children may come to school dressed up as a book character.

⁹ The Literature Quiz is a fun event which happens once a year at school, usually around May. Children are selected to answer questions for their teams and the questions are usually based on popular literature.

Luke: *Yea, she is still reading them with me. The really good bedtime story.*



Figure 5: Luke dressed up as Harry Potter

The boys' parents themselves have stated why they believe reading to their children is important, not only as a family practice, but to continue their relationship with books. Anne, Luke's mother has said:

Anne: *I read somewhere that children's love for books wanes by Grade 4 as this is usually the time when parents stop reading to them because they (the children) can read on their own...*

Bedtime reading is largely seen as an emergent literacy practice and most of the importance of it is placed as such. From my own teaching I have often heard parents of Grade 3 children say that they don't need to read to their children anymore because they are now able to read by themselves. However, these practices do continue in some households even as the children move through formal schooling. Taylor (1983: 31) provides a description of a bedtime ritual which includes a nine year old, who gets into the bed next to her mother, propped up by pillows and sharing stories. Both Luke and David have described how their mothers climb into bed with them and read their books and that they look forward to this time with their mother. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998: 848) remark that the shared story book reading "speaks of love, the importance of the family unit, and of parental commitment to a child's future." This is undoubtedly true for these two families.

It is also important to note that the bedtime reading routine is not singularly linked to just the individual's mother, but that these practices continued in the household even when their mothers were not present, as evidenced in the example of David's grandmother re-reading the Narnia series to him. Thus shared reading in these families is not limited to a bonding ritual between a mother and child, but it is seen as an important and valued family practice within both homes, possibly passed down from one generation to another.

In the case of both David and Luke, it is clear that their mothers' literacy practices, as well as their interests and passions have greatly influenced them – from their love of books to the kinds of books that they read. This is apparent in David's love for History which he seems to have obtained from his mother, Hilary, who studied the subject both at school and at university. Hilary attributes his first love for History to bedtime stories she told him when he was younger:

Hilary: *His grasp of and interest in history is exceptional. I suppose this started with a bed time story I used to tell him about World War II – using various insects as the opposing parties in the Allied and Axis forces – Bumble Bees were the Americans, Cockroaches in leather jackets were the Nazis, Mosquitoes were the Japanese, Ladybirds were the British and Grasshoppers were the French.*

From the above we can see that Hilary has used a multimodal approach during this literacy event. She is using artefacts (toys in this case) to tell David the story and to ignite his interest and make it easier for him to understand.

David is allowed to watch the news and historical films as well. Hilary permits this as she feels that due to David's maturity and the kinds of conversations that take place at home, David would benefit from such exposure. She feels that he needs to be aware of what is going on in the world and be able to form an opinion:

Hilary: *David has, from a young age been allowed to watch the news and watch historical movies. He always showed interest and given his receptiveness and maturity it seemed like the right thing to allow. He is a third child and is exposed to a lot of discussion on topics that most 10 year olds are not privy to.*

Hilary's last sentence is an indicator of what practices the family finds important. The family as a whole engage in lengthy discussions during dinner about current events. In order for David to take part as a family member, he would then have to understand the context of the discussions and according to Hilary, he doesn't seem to have a problem doing so.

Using Stein and Slonimsky's study (2006) involving families with different social backgrounds and the way in which the children are being unconsciously socialised to be certain members of society, we can see that through David's exposure to discussions involving current events and his mother's willingness to educate him on these topics, she is unconsciously socialising him, and providing him with skills which will enable him to become a member of the 'ruling class', where such discussions naturally occur around the dinner table. She is providing him with access to pathways which will lead to great future aspirations for him due to the time that she invests in his literacy interests and the vast amount of resources at his disposal because of his social class positioning.

4.2.2. Drawing

Defining literacy has largely depended on determining the purpose for which literacy is used. One of the ways in which it is used is to convey meaning and to communicate. Drawings are also considered "meaning making texts" (Kress, 1997; Barton & Hamilton, 1998) which communicate thoughts and ideas and thus, the practice of drawing has been added to this study. Kress (1997) sees drawing as being one of a "plethora of ways in which children make meaning before they come to school" and points out that school is usually the place which "asks the children to focus on the world through writing" (preface xix). For young children there is no distinction between drawing and writing; their drawings are their early attempts at writing and conveying their thoughts and ideas. In formal schooling there is a divide between drawing and writing but children do not necessarily see this divide as drawing continues to be an important part of their meaning-making repertoire. Drawing has particularly been an influential semiotic practice for David. He has mentioned that he sometimes enjoys drawing more than he does writing as writing can be more time consuming. He classifies drawing as one of his favourite weekend activities. He works on old pictures that he has previously drawn, such as his own version of a 'Hobbit ¹⁰world map' (Figure 6 below), which he alters when he invents a new country. He began drawing this map after his mother read *The Hobbit* by JRR Tolkien to him and he became fascinated with the characters and places within the novel. David also enjoys drawing the characters for the stories that he writes

¹⁰ Hobbits are a fictional, miniature, humanoid race who live in The Shyre in Middle-earth, created by the author, J. R. R. Tolkien. His books are very popular and have been made into successful, award-winning films.

and he often adds in more detail to their appearance. Thus, drawing for him is intimately connected to his reading and writing practices. His drawings are usually shown to his mother who then comments on them and suggests further ideas or improvements, which is again a pedagogised kind of interaction.

David often doodles and draws with Hilary, as a shared literacy practice, and Hilary usually shows David how to draw images that he feels he cannot draw accurately. The crest for his *Minecraft* world "Davideria" seen below (figure 7) was a shared drawing activity between him and his mother:



Figure 6: The crest drawn by David and Hilary for "Davideria"- his Minecraft world

David's crest is particularly interesting as it is an example of a multimodal text which carries a range of meanings, not only for the creator, but also considering the social context and understanding how David thinks about his interests:

David: *I was... bored in the car and I wanted to make my own crest... and so we (David and his mother) googled "crest" and so... there's a helmet with feathers at the top of the shield*

NA: *uh huh*

David: *And then... there can be either 2 or 4 squares in the shield with any symbol... and my 2 symbols that were in the 4... squares... was a crown... with wings that represent everlasting kingdom*

NA: yea...

David: and then... erm... 2 swords that represent strength

NA: uh huh

David: and then... a helmet with feathers coming out... with a dog... a hound's face howling

NA: Why a hound?

David: Coz it just had to be an animal on top of the helmet and they're like wolves so they're cool

NA: Okay

David: So it was a hound howling

NA: Okay

David: Then there has to be a motto... on top and it is "Light for All" and then there be can be... there can be 2 creatures holding the shield up... mythical or real... and I chose a bear and a centaur//

NA: Why a centaur?

David: I love centaurs

NA: Why?

David: Like... in Narnia... Percy Jackson... Harry Potter they are... really dependable. They're always the good guys but they're not like the heroes... more like they watch the stars and they're like hippies

NA: Oh hippies yea *laughs* and they're not the main characters anyway//

David: // no

NA: You said you like the sideline characters more//

David: Ya, and they're like calm the fleets with their songs and stuff

NA: hmm... so on the on the... did you google... you googled what crests look like and got the breakdown like you need this this this and you created your own for each section?

David: Ya, this is the crest for Davideria... for the capital city, Davidal//

NA:// Isn't Davidal a modern city though?

David: Yea but this is the crest... it had to like have started somewhere

NA: But why a mystical creature for a modern city?

David: yea... but it... the crest like... King... you know Prince William? His crest has a unicorn holding it up

NA: Oh I see! I understand now. That's cool! So this is your crest for your Minecraft created world?

David: Ya, for Davederia

NA: So you drew this with your mom?

David: Ya, my bear and centaur looked bad so she helped draw them and I did the rest

I have known from Grade 3 that David had a passion for Greek mythology as he was reading the Percy Jackson series¹¹ then and we would often talk about this topic as it is a mutual

¹¹ The Percy Jackson series is a pentalogy of adventure and fiction books drawing on Greek mythology and written by Rick Riordan. Two of these books have been made into films thus far.

passion. It has also been recognised that David enjoys History, and this drawing provides further evidence for this. It shows that David, through his love of reading adventure and fantasy books, can convey his knowledge of mythical creatures (the centaurs) as they appear in the books that he has read (*The Chronicles of Narnia*, the *Harry Potter series* and *Percy Jackson*) and the subsequent films that derived from it. It is also conveyed in his knowledge of crests, his desire to create one and the way he has used visual images and symbolism to represent characteristics of his world which he deems important: the swords to represent strength and the crowns with wings to represent an everlasting kingdom. By creating the crest, David has accessed and used different literacy and semiotic modes to convey meaning. Significantly, he has used conventional forms of literacy, and taken care to follow the conventions of meaning-making in Crests, in order to produce more meaning and depth to a virtual world he has created in the digital game *Minecraft*. His text production using the traditional technologies of pencil and paper thus extend his engagement with his virtual world. He has drawn figures to represent different symbols, which further shows that drawings are indeed a form of meaning-making, and uses written English language to convey his motto for Davideria, "Light for All."

As highlighted in my Literature Review, Hubbard (1989) and Christianakis (2011) have argued for drawing to be seen as an important tool in meaning-making, and not merely a pre-writing strategy. For David we have evidence that drawing is not merely a pre-writing strategy but rather is another practice which is part of his everyday life and is intimately connected to his reading and writing practises. Furthermore it is a shared practice for him and his mother. This shared practice is important to David as he clearly places value in his mother's input and her ability to draw as well. It is also a significant indication that his mother's passions have transferred to him as he finds drawing to be a stimulating and rewarding practice.

4.2.3. Fantasy Play

Fantasy play is reportedly fundamental in how children develop and show their creativity: "an important benefit of early pretend play may be its enhancement of the child's capacity for cognitive flexibility and, ultimately, creativity" (Russ, 2004; Singer & Singer, 2005). Russ, for example, found that early imaginative play was associated with increased creative

performance years later (Russ: 2004; Russ, & Fiorelli: 2010). Whether it be through dressing up in costumes, or playing with toys, play itself has a crucial role in a child's development. It is no surprise then that fantasy play has emerged as an important practice for both David and Luke.

Fantasy play has proven to be an important aspect contributing towards David's creativity and his interest in writing stories. From a young age he would love dressing up as different characters from books that his mother read to him, or from films that he watched. He had a large dressing up box and would often take something out and pretend to be that character- including (perhaps unusually for a boy) a ballerina. As mentioned before, David dressed up as a beloved character from his favourite book series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, during the school's Book Character Day.



Figure 7: David dressed up as different popular culture characters (age 2-5). This multimodal artefact is taken from a scrapbook of David's earlier life which Hilary put together.

David also partook in many fantasy games with his twin half siblings when he was younger, and still does so when he sees them (David's half-siblings moved to the USA so he does not see them often). These fantasy games were largely based on popular fantasy and adventure-based films and books that they had read.

David explains that the games he played with his siblings greatly influenced him and his creativity. When David was 8 years old and in Grade 2, he began writing a narrative at home which was based on a game that his siblings played, depicting scenes from *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, the latter of which his mother read to him when he was 5 years old.

NA: *What made you start writing the book?*

David: *Erm... I just wanted to do something... to write about something that me and my little brothers used to play and I could share with them*

NA: *So the story you started writing was based on a game you used to play with them?*

David: *Yes*

NA: *what was the game based on?*

David: *Lord of the Rings and the Hobbit...*

NA: *How did the game work?*

David: *We played like... all the movies we watched we would have like a really bad version of it... like... Lobi One Kinobi and Logoladdin and (???)*

NA: **laughs* okay*

David: *So we would like... the characters that we liked we would just add the first letter of our name and then we are them and we would play.*

NA: *Okay, so like how you were Daruman..*

David: *Ya and Daragon... I was usually them... I had some orks that I would use in battles*

NA: *Did you all get to choose your own characters or did someone decide who should be who?*

David: *No we never ever loved the same characters so we were always the ones that we liked the most*

NA: *Ok cool, so did you re-enact scenes from the movie or do you own thing//*

David: *// ya we re-enacted scenes from the movie.... well sometimes we would play real and sometimes we would play made up.... Sometimes... like sometimes we would say things like play with our bodies with swords and stuff and then use our bodies but then sometimes we would play with toys.*

NA: *What kinds of toys would you play with? Like your Roman army ones?*

David: *No, like we always had... at my dad's house we collected like... there used to be these really nice... they don't make them anymore but they were really nice knight figurines and we collected all of them... one of them was the archer I told you about.*

NA: *The archer in the story you wrote for me?¹²*

David: *Yea, that guy.*

NA: *Ok, so what would you do with the knight figurines?*

David: *We would choose which ones we are and then fight against each other. Like we would pretend the knight figurine is someone.*

¹² David wrote a creative writing piece in Grade 3 in which one of the characters was an elf. He based the character on a toy archer and there was a description of it on the box.

These toys that David mentions are also very precious to him as he currently still enjoys playing with them by re-enacting scenes based on popular fantasy films.

He also has a large toy box in his own room which he plays with as well. The Roman army figurines from his own toy box were his favourite during the time of my research, as well as an archer, who made an appearance in one of the stories he wrote for me in Grade Three as mentioned in the transcript above. Thus, fantasy play and the use of toys have contributed to David's creative thought and planning, forming important resources for his writing.



Figure 8: David's favourite toy figurines

Playing with his half brothers has been an important practice for David and he reported that through play he he developed a love for the fantasy genre:

NA: *Why do you like the fantasy and adventure genre so much?*

David: *Erm... probably because of my brothers... they like fantasy too and my mom read The Hobbit to me when I was young*

David's mother seems to be in agreement. She feels that his brothers were and are a large contributing factor towards his creativity/love of fantasy genre:

Hilary: *His close relationship to his twin half-brothers who are only sixteen months younger than him fuelled an enormous range of fantasy games – dressing up, sword fights, movies, plays and Minecraft were things they shared for many years before they relocated. All three children have benefited from their years as the 'Three Musketeers' and display particular creativity.*

Luke also enjoyed dressing up though he enjoyed it more when he was younger. His mother has mentioned that he had many dress up outfits growing up and they spent a fortune on the costumes as it was one of his favourite things to do when he was young. He particularly enjoyed dressing up as popular superheroes and as the main character from the Ben 10 series. Similarly, these were the toys that he largely enjoyed playing with. Ben 10 specifically was his favourite:

Anne: *Ben 10 was really big growing up. He would go through phases where he would be interested in something else, but then Ben 10 would resurface. He had dressing up outfits, many watches, cards, books, games, colouring in books, DVDs, PSP games...*

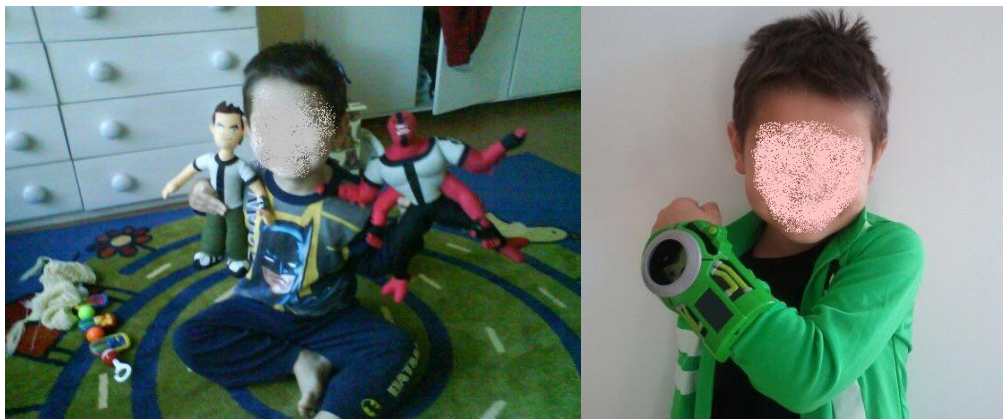


Figure 9: Luke age 4 playing with Ben 10 toys (on the left) and dressed up as the titular character at age 6 (on the right)

Presently, Luke no longer dresses up as he is more interested in digital gaming and playing sports outside with his younger brother, Adam. He has also commented that he enjoys playing with marbles, Pokémon cards, yo-yos and occasionally, Lego. These are popular items which are played with at school as well.

During a conversation with Luke's mother, Anne, she told me about an interesting event that had occurred when Luke was playing outside. She said that he had gone out to play cricket with his glove, a ball and his bat and after an hour or so later, he came running into the house and proceeded to tell her that he came up with an idea for the story he has been writing (the

story which will be discussed in Chapter 5). As this was of particular interest to me, I then asked Luke about it during one of our interviews:

NA: *Your mom told me that one day you were playing outside and then you came back in because you thought of something for your story?*

Luke: *Ya, I was outside, like playing my story*

NA: *You were playing your story (?) How(?)*

Luke: *Like I used my cricket glove as armour and I wore them and I think I had my cricket helmet too... No, I didn't... then I started playing out what I wanted to happen and how that part of the story would happen.*

NA: *So what part were you playing out?*

Luke: *It was a fight sequence between Daniel and Lord Vanquish*

NA: *Were you alone or with//*

Luke: *I was on my own*

NA: *So did you go outside with the intention to play your story?*

Luke: *I can't remember. I think I might have gone out to play and while I was playing the story came to me...*

NA: *Do you do this often?*

Luke: *No, not often. It just happens randomly. Like I'll start playing and then the story will pop in my head and I'll talk to myself and play the story and get ideas of what will still happen.*

From the above transcription, we can see that Luke had gone outside with the intention to play a normal game of cricket (albeit alone) and while doing so, his play inspired him to think about his story and then he embarked on fantasy play, using his cricket gear to symbolise weaponry. Thus his fantasy play has supported him and provided a stimulus for the development of his writing.

As it was with drawing, play and the use of artefacts (toys with David and the cricket gear for Luke) can be traced as being connected to the boys' current literacy practices. David's play with his brothers inspired him to begin his creative writing practices, and fantasy play with Luke has encouraged his current creative writing practices. Thus, both children are drawing from resources and practices which are available to them in their daily lives.

In the research literature, play isn't seen as a conventional or even substantial literacy practice for 10 year old children. Fantasy play is usually considered an emergent literacy practice within literacy research (Singer & Singer, 1990; 2005; Singer et al, 2010; Christie, 1998; 2013), and there is a dearth of research on fantasy play amongst older children, and on the links between play and children's literacy. Prinsloo (2004) stands out as a study linking play with literacy in formal schooling where, a group of children from a township in Cape Town were

playing at school and they drew on a range of resources and influences to take and make meaning, which aided in their literacy development. However, these children were seven years and had just begun formal schooling.

David's mother has commented on how David still enjoys playing with his toys, even at 10 years old, but that he doesn't let anyone know he does so because it might be seen as "odd and childish":

***Hilary:** even now, aged 10 he has a daily routine of grabbing a figurine and disappearing into some fantasy world with it. His ritual is to throw the figurine against a large blue couch we have in the lounge, then lunging down and springing in the air with it, all the while uttering sounds of battle and great triumph and tribulation. It seems to relax him but he is aware that the habit might be a bit odd and childish so he is sheepish about doing it in front of anyone but the close family.*

At age 10, David has already been conditioned to believe that engaging in fantasy play with his toys in such a boisterous manner is "childish" despite his obvious enjoyment.

4.3. Conclusion

"...literacy is deeply embedded in the social processes of family life and is not some, specific list of activities added to the family agenda to explicitly teach reading."

(Denny Taylor, 1986: 92).

Many theorists and researchers have shown how families play an influential role in the literacy development of their children. This impact is stronger during the child's early years but continues throughout their school years. According to a study devised by the UK National Literacy Trust (McCoy & Cole, 2011: 3), it has been found that parents' attitudes and support for their children's learning positively shapes academic performance (Fan and Chen, 2001) and is a more powerful force for academic success than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education (Flouri and Buchanan, 2004). Research shows that the earlier parents become involved in their children's literacy practices, the more profound the results will be and the effects will last a lot longer (Mullis et al., 2004).

Through analysing the out of school literacy practices of David and Luke, I developed a strong sense of their family literacy practices, and their family social practices more broadly. Literacy practices are deeply implicated in what it means to be part of the family, and what practices

are considered important for these two boys. The amount of support and time that is spent on these practices draws members together as a family unit. For both David and Luke there is insurmountable evidence that indicates how their families have played vital roles in their literacy development through the time spent engaging in their family social practices that have just occurred naturally within their homes. Within family settings there are both multiple literacies and multiple literacy practices (Taylor, 1997:1) We see this in how David's drawings become representations for a digital world, and how imaginary play and using toys can envision and provide a stimulus for writing.

It has been said that literacy can only be understood by understanding what it means to be literate in the groups (families and communities) in which it occurs, as families and communities construct particular ways of literate thinking and behaving, and value specific types of literacy (Spedding & al, 2007; Volk & de Acosta, 2003). This ranges from culture to culture and across social class. Taylor (1997: 4) mentions how it is important to recognise and honour not only the diversity and richness of literacies that exist within families but also the communities and cultures of which they are a part. Children's learning occurs through authentic, social experiences which are situated in their daily lives. This is clearly evident within David and Luke's families. The adults in their lives do not set out to teach their children certain kinds of literacy but rather socialise them into what they deem as important family practices.

The aim of this chapter was to identify and examine the out of school literacy practices of two top performing boys who excel in creative writing. What became evident is that these practises are largely influenced by their family, and what constitutes their family practises when they are together. It is clear that both boys have grown up and are living in a print-rich and literature-rich environment, where material and semiotic resources are abundant, and where this environment and the people within it are actively encouraging their meaning-making pursuits. This has undoubtedly contributed to why these boys are so fluent in the craft of narrative writing.

CHAPTER FIVE: APPROPRIATION AND CREATIVE WRITING

Children are active, creative members of their literacy worlds. They draw on all manner of resources from the domains that they are simultaneously part of... to accomplish their purposes and goals

Feiler et al (2007:6)

5.1. Introduction

In a study linking home and school literacy, Feiler and others analysed children's discursive practices and found that their participants used a range of resources around them in order to communicate their thoughts, ideas and feelings. One of the ways in which they did so can be explained using Bakhtin's (1986) notion of appropriation; a second can be explained by the notion of intertextuality (Kristeva, 1980). As explained in Chapter 2, appropriation is used to describe the process by which we respond to and transform the utterances of others and, in turn use them for our own purposes. Bakhtin argues that our words are always someone else's words first; and these words sound with the intonations and evaluations of others who have used them before, and from whom we learned them (Lensmire & Beals, 1994; Irvine, 2004).

Based on Bakhtin's notion of ideology, Kristeva introduced the concept of "intertextuality", which refers to the way in which texts are related to each other as a text cannot exist as an isolated "self-contained whole" (Lanir, 2013). A text is formed by the repetition and transformation of other texts. This is based on the view that since a writer is a reader of texts before the writer creates his/her work, the work will unavoidably contain and be influenced by echoes of other author's work. Thus a text is not the original product of one author but of several connected authors. Through the years, understanding of intertextuality has transformed and moved from being exclusively based on oral and written texts to include non-literary art forms such as paintings, music, architecture, photography and even film (Simandan, 2010).

Popular culture is often visible within children's narrative writing as research has indisputably shown that children find it easier to write about what they know and that they choose to write about their interests, otherwise termed their "ruling passions" (Barton and Hamilton,

1998: 83). It is evident that David and Luke's literacy practices are largely influenced by popular culture. This is noticeable in what they choose to read and draw as well as the games that they play. The purpose of this chapter is to develop an understanding of how children use popular culture as a creative resource, what elements are being appropriated and how this has influenced and impacted their writing. It will show that the children are using these resources to serve their own purpose- to understand and create meaning in their own lives and in doing so, they reveal insight into their own identity positions. I will be using Bakhtin's notion of appropriation and Kristeva's notion of intertextuality as theoretical tools to trace and identify which resources are being appropriated in the boys' written work. Two narratives produced by each participant will be introduced and analysed using this framework: one written and formally assessed at school, and another written at home during their free time.

5.2. Appropriating popular culture: popular texts and media in narrative worlds

Many children are embedded within a world in which popular cultural media, texts and artefacts are key to their leisure pursuits. Popular television programmes and characters, popular music singers, sports stars and other aspects of popular culture all inform their out-of-school play. Reviews of research in this field demonstrate how literacy activities that relate to these popular cultural texts and artefacts in the classroom can be highly motivating for children and can lead to greater levels of engagement in classroom tasks (Marsh, 2008).

It is hardly surprising that watching films and television have emerged as a creative resource for both David and Luke, considering how popular an activity it is amongst children from middle class and affluent socioeconomic backgrounds. Both boys spend large amounts of their free time partaking in this activity, and their interests in specific shows inspire stories that they write. They have both mentioned how watching films and television shows is like reading but the visual images and sound have been provided for them.

Evidence has shown that one of the reasons why boys perform less well than girls in writing activities is because they lack interest in writing during their free time (Daly, 2003; Estyn, 2008; DfES, 2007). David and Luke are exceptions to this as both boys had started writing their own stories at home a few weeks before my research had begun. This significant out of school

literacy practice began as a direct influence of popular culture, namely through the books that they read, a television show and popular films.

Through an analysis of both children's writing, it became clear that not only are their narratives influenced by popular culture resources, but that many aspects of their texts have been appropriated from what they have read or watched. However, as the data analysis unfolded, specific aspects of the boys' narratives which were consistently appropriated became clear. For David, this occurs through his appropriation of characters, and for Luke through the appropriation of genre, theme and setting.

5.2.1. David's narrative writing: appropriating characters

During the time of my research, David showed a passionate interest in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series. The film series consists of four films (with the 5th one to be released in 2017). His mother has reported that his love for pirating adventures began when he was much younger after watching the Disney film classic, *Peter Pan*. David himself remembers a particular pirate-themed birthday party and mentioned it as being "one of his most memorable parties of his childhood."



Figure 10: David's third birthday party was "Pirates and Princesses" themed. He recalls this as one of his favourite childhood parties

His interest since then hasn't dissolved but has heightened since the release of the successful *Pirates of the Caribbean* film franchise. He reports that this is his favourite series of films, with the *Chronicles of Narnia*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Star Wars* following close behind. All of these films are within the fantasy genre. He has even named Johnny Depp, widely popular amongst children and adults for portraying the infamous role of Captain Jack Sparrow in the *Pirates of*

the *Caribbean* film series, as his favourite film star and dressed up as him for his friend's birthday party.



Figure 11: David dressed up as Johnny Depp (left) The actor, Johnny Depp (right)

A weekend of series watching while ill inspired David to write his own version of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series:

David: *I was sick at home and I watched all the Pirates of the Caribbean movies and I thought it would be cool to write my own version of the story since pirates are awesome*

His home-written narrative, *Sea Farers*¹³, contains a tale about a blacksmith named James Percer who is estranged from his family after a shipwreck but then discovers that his older sister, Emily, has been captured by an evil pirate captain named John Gaurtez. The blacksmith enlists the help of Adam Levis, who David describes in his written narrative as “a hobo who lived on the beaches of Port Isilton who lives in a shack of old drift wood and does nothing all day but drink rum. There are even roomers [rumours] of him once being part of Guartez’s crew” to assist him in rescuing his sister. While on the journey they discover that his older brother, William, is a pirate captain. Whilst all this is happening, the pirate captains from around the world are searching for 12 magical triangular pendants, which, if you find them all, bequeaths you with the power to control land, air, and sea.

¹³ See Appendix #X for the unedited version of *Sea Farers*

For those who aren't familiar, the first *Pirates of the Caribbean* film, *Pirates of the Caribbean and the Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003, produced by Walt Disney Pictures and Jerry Bruckheimer films) features a blacksmith, William, who wishes to rescue Elizabeth, a woman who he loves. He enlists the help of a pirate captain, Captain Jack Sparrow, a dishevelled looking man who often drinks rum. Along the journey William discovers that Jack Sparrow and a crew of pirates (led by Captain Barbossa who kidnapped Elizabeth) are trying to collect 882 magical gold medallions which, if all placed together, can lift a curse which has been placed on them. This is the plot for the first film. In the later films, more kidnapping and searches arise from various other pirate captains, usually with one of the protagonists being the kidnapped character.

One can see the intertextual links between David's narrative and the film. Firstly, the plot contains traces of appropriation: both text and film involve a rescue and a quest for golden objects, popular plot lines appropriated by many other authors since the release of Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* in 1883 (Phillips, 2001). Secondly, many of the characters have been appropriated as well: there is the damsel in distress (James' sister Emily in his text, and the love interest, Elizabeth, from the film), the protagonists of both text and film are blacksmiths (James Percer in his text and Will Turner in the film) and a pirate who enjoys alcohol (Adam Levis the "hobo" in his text, and Captain Jack Sparrow in the film). Lastly the antagonists are both evil pirate captains who are prone to kidnapping (Captain Guartez in his text and various pirate captains in the film series as kidnapping tends to happen quite often- also commonly found within pirate literature).

David's narrative is left unfinished, ending where he realises James' sister has been captured by Captain Guartez. The rest of the plot was told to me as he explained that his narrative is quite complicated and would be "more than just one book". However, as David loves drawing (as evident in Chapter 4) he had already drawn all the characters for his narrative- including the ones which he hadn't yet written about- before he had even begun writing. Drawing, in this instance, became a pre-writing strategy for David as it helped develop his characters. For David, drawing and writing go hand in hand. They both develop and complement each other. These drawings contain traces of pirate characterisation which has been appropriated over the years through literature and films:



Figure 12: David's illustrations of his characters. Top row (left to right): Adam Levis, Commodore Eustace and William Edult. Bottom row (left to right): James Percer, John Gaurtez, and Gludge (Gaurtez's first mate who is not featured in the text)

David's drawings portray the stereotypical imagery of pirates which is found in popular culture today. Pirate captains were identified by their more fashionable clothing of the eighteenth century, which were worn by the genteel and men in power. This usually consisted of a long overcoat, buttoned jackets, black wide-rimmed cocked hats and breeches tucked into boots, which is evident in David's drawings of Commodore Eustace, Gaurtez and William. Regular pirates or sailors dressed in more ordinary clothing consisting of short or long breeches, a long shirt, and a white or black hat. This we can see in David's drawing of James, Adam and Gludge. David explains that James is missing his hat because he is an ordinary blacksmith and did not grow up in the world of piracy. Weapons are usually carried on the person as well: either swords, short daggers or pistols. Each of David's characters has a weapon, with William Edult having an extra walking stick as well which he uses as a weapon. David says he has added flair to his description because he considers William to be a more distinguished pirate.

David has also completed the cover for *Sea Farers*. This was done collaboratively with his mother, Hilary. He had shown her his original plan for the cover (Figure 5) and together, they constructed the final product:

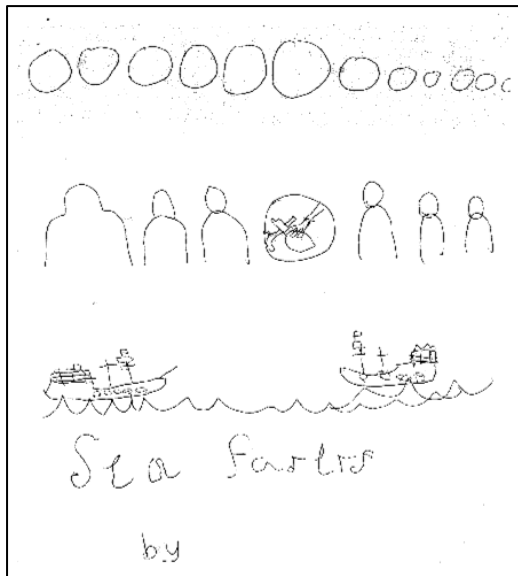


Figure 5: David's original draft of the front cover

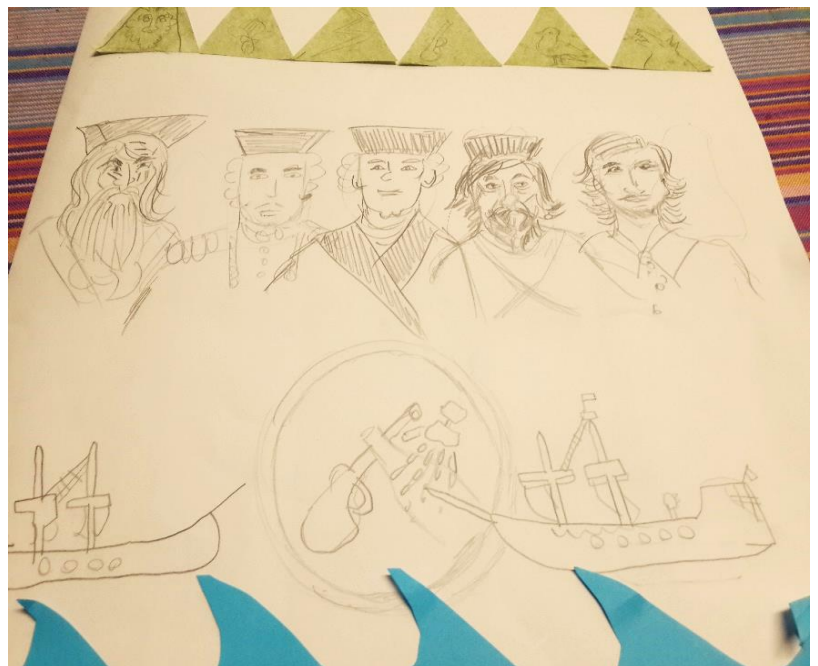
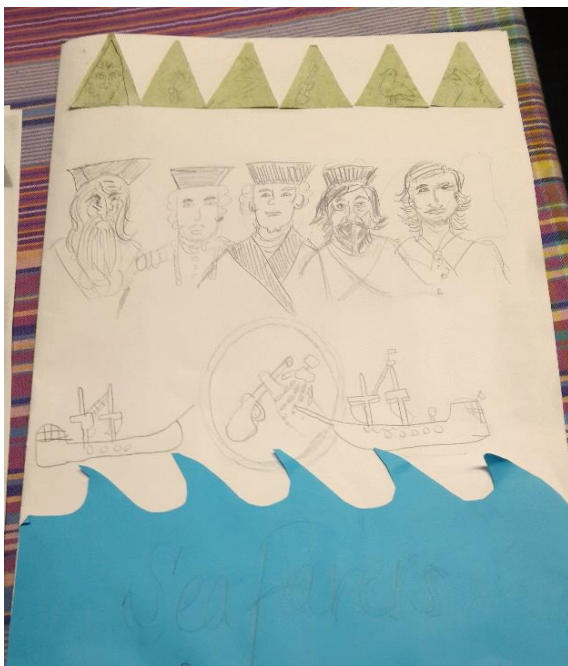


Figure 6: The front cover for *Sea Farers*.

In Figure 6 the characters were drawn by David's mother based on his oral descriptions. David drew the rest of the illustrations. The characters from left to right are: David Guarte, Governor Gorander Goose, Commodore Eustace, David Levis, and James Percer. Above the characters are coloured paper which David cut out into triangles and assembled into a row. They represent the golden triangular pendants. Each pendant contains a symbol which

represents the pirate captain to which the pendant belongs which David mentioned in the transcript above. Below David has created a depiction of a sea using blue cardboard which he has cut out in a wave formation. The title of his narrative has been written on the cardboard and this was done by Hilary. Above the sea he has drawn two ships during a battle with a pistol, bottle of rum and a skeletal hand. This jointly constructed multimodal artefact (the use of different materials, modes and techniques) is another example of a shared meaning-making practice between David and his mother, and of their enjoyment in co-constructing meaningful texts together. It also provides evidence of David's interest in developing the characters for his narratives as he took great pleasure and considerable time in drawing these illustrations and creating the book cover, even before he had completed his narrative. David has stated that when it comes to writing stories, he most enjoys writing about the characters:

NA: *Which part of your stories do you like to write about?*

David: *I love to write about like... really impOrtant meetings and stuff... where like... they like will talk and argue and stuff... like the characters will have different opinions and eventually they will get angry and start fighting... and then... one guy stops them and it's more fun coz the people are all different and think differently*

NA: *So you like writing about who they are?*

David: *Ya... like their personalities and who they are... It makes them more interesting.*

During an interview, I asked David how he develops the characters for his narratives. He explained that most of his characters are taken from books and films that he enjoys watching, and that he alters them according to his story:

NA: *I think so. Speaking about characters, how do you come up with your characters for your story?*

David: *Umm... well, I kind of... sometimes they're completely made up and then sometimes they're based on characters that already exist.*

NA: *Characters that already exist?*

David: *Ya... like in movies or books or something*

David explained that his stories will always contain characters that he particularly likes. These characters are usually not the main protagonist of the narrative- the typical hero- but rather

the character who is usually written as a supporting role and who is often misjudged, but proves to be more than they seem:

David: *They must be more... like they shouldn't just be a typical hero or main guy or whatever. I don't like those characters. They can't just be good all the time, they should be more than just that... I don't know how to explain... they should like... like surprise you and show that they're not what you think... I don't know how else to explain it...*

NA: *Ok I think I understand... like I've noticed from the stories you read you like the character that seems bad or boring but then you realise they're actually being good or showing another side of themselves?*

David: *Ya! Like he isn't the typical hero...*

NA: *So you're more for the antihero than the hero in the stories. The bad guy who might actually be a good guy or like a likeable character?*

David: *Yes! Exactly. Like everyone just thinks they're one way but they're not*

NA: *You like those kinda books with those characters?*

David: *Ya. Like he isn't usually the main guy. He is like the side character guy who just turns out to be awesome anyway...*

NA: *Do you like writing stories with characters like that?*

David: *yea otherwise my story would just be boring. And I like characters that are funny... like the comic relief type character...*

NA: *Oh yes, me too! Like Gimli [a dwarf character from Lord of the Rings films]*

David: *uh huh*

Based on this information, I asked David who his favourite characters were in his story, *Sea Farers*. Unsurprisingly, the characters he chose portray the same characteristics as mentioned above:

NA: *From all these characters who is your favourite?*

David: *Probably William Edult and Adam Levis*

NA: *Why those two?*

David: *Because Adam is a hobo and he is cool... and William is just... amazing*

NA: *Amazing...*

David: *Ya I'm making him like come out of nowhere... and he is like the smoothest guy ever. I like him.*

NA: *What do you mean he is the smoothest guy ever?*

David: He has like... cool catch phrases and stuff *laughs* and he is a gentleman pirate. He has like a cool walking stick that he fights with with his sword but he doesn't need to walk with it. It just looks cool.

NA: Is he a good fighter?

David: Ya like one of the best but you wouldn't think so looking at him because he looks so... because he looks like a gentleman pirate

NA: Ok and what do you like about the hobo?

David: He is an alcoholic and he throws beer bottles at people... like he used to be a pirate captain but now he's just like a hobo living in a shack by the beach and he's funny.

NA: Oh, he is funny?

David: Ya he is

NA: So is he the comedic relief in your story?

David: uh huh

NA: Oh and James Percer? Is he cool?

David: Oh no, he's just like the typical hero type. .

NA: And you don't like that hey?

David: No, that's boring.

Similarly, his narrative writing which was done in class at school, *One Big Hourglass*¹⁴, also contains intertextual links with characters he enjoys from other popular books and films, specifically *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Harry Potter* series and subsequent films.

One Big Hourglass is a story about two boys, Equal and Nariken, who live with their aunt Nenga and their uncle Floch and a desert nymph named Muggwump, who uncle Floch won during a gambling session. The boys are told to go outside with Muggwump and they take along their pet raven, who can sense shiny objects. Whilst outside the raven starts "going ballistic" and the floor magically opens revealing an underground staircase. Muggwump warns the children against going underground but they continue. Once underground they put on magical rings in order to stop time from continuing and as they walk further into the cave they see a dwarf sitting on a mountain of gold. The doors shut and the dwarf has "a nasty grin on his face". The story then ends on a cliffhanger with a note from the author that the narrative

¹⁴ See Appendix for the unedited version of *One Big Hourglass*

is “to be continued” and finally ends with a moral lesson, stating that the children should listen to Muggwump, who is older than them.

When I read the story I was particularly fascinated with the character, Muggwump, as the name sounded very familiar. David describes him in his narrative:

“One of these gambling sessions won him a slave... but this was no ordinary slave. This was a desert nymph called Muggwump. Muggwump had dry baige [beige] skin with sandy curly hair and beard, with nothing to ware [wear] but a loin cloth.”

Muggwump’s origins were revealed during an interview with David:

NA: *Muggwump? That’s a different name. What’s a muggwump?*

David: *Muggwump came from Puddleglum who is a marsh-miggle.*

NA: *Marsh-miggle?*

David: *It’s a Narnian who lives in a swamp*

NA: *ok in which book?*

David: *Silver Chair*

NA: *the one you reading with your gran?*

David: *uh huh.*

NA: *okay so why Muggwump?*

David: *My grandma calls Puddleglum a Muggwump because of the way he acts*

David has a close relationship with his grandmother who often looks after him when David’s mother is travelling. They were re-reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* series together at the time of my data collection. When David wrote this story, he and his grandmother were reading the sixth book in the series entitled *The Silver Chair*, where the character Puddleglum is introduced. As David has mentioned, his grandmother refers to the character as Muggwump. Mugglewump is a character from the Roald Dahl novel *“The Twits”*. Thus, one can see the intertextual referencing coming into play across three narratives.

Puddleglum in *The Silver Chair* is referred to as a “wet blanket” (Lewis, 1953) because he is portrayed as a very pessimistic character who usually tries to steer away from danger and often warns the protagonists away from suspicious situations. Puddleglum is appropriated in *One Big Hourglass* as Muggwump and is shown to have similar characteristics. In David’s

narrative, Muggwump suggests that the boys head back home instead of delving into the underground cave:

(Muggwump speaking): [“]Masters I think we should start heading back home.[“]

(Egual speaking): [“]Oh, dry up Muggwump. Where’s your sense of adventure?[“]

“Oh dry up” is a common phrase found in English children’s literature, which is used when a character is being particularly pessimistic. It is used in popular English narratives such as the *Chronicles of Narnia* series “That won’t be much fun.” “Oh dry up! Stop complaining!” (Lewis, 1953, Quote taken from *Silver Chair*) and in the *Harry Potter* series “Oh dry up, Dursley, you great prune!” (Rowling, 1997, quote taken from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*). As mentioned in Chapter 4, David thoroughly enjoys both these series. So here we can see that David has echoed the dialogue from characters in the novels he has read who were speaking to a pessimistic character.

The intertextual reference between Puddleglum and Muggwump is once again echoed at the end of David’s narrative:

“So kids listen to your elders because maybe if they had listened to Muggwump they wouldn’t be in a sticky situation”

David takes on the voice of a narrator and imitates an adult advising a child “listen to your elders” about listening to an older more knowledgeable other, and through this you can also detect his sense of humour. He has used this to portray that the children should have listened to Muggwump and not just seen him as being the unadventurous older figure. This echoes Puddleglum as, even though he is seen as being the pessimistic character, he often proves to be useful and is eventually portrayed as a misjudged character. Thus one can say that David’s narrative contains two lessons: children should listen to their adults, and that one should not judge another.

When one reads this one might think that David was parodying an adult because children generally do not like being told that they need to listen to those who are older. But knowing David as I do, I knew that it had to mean more, as Puddleglum is the type of character that David would like. He is odd, provides comic relief but is also misjudged and aids in helping the main characters. These are typical characteristics that would attract David. David confirmed

this during an interview, stating the exact reasons which I have provided, which further confirms that he purposefully places these characters in his narratives that originally appear in texts he enjoys:

David: *ya I really like him. He's like... such a pessimistic character and says all this strange things... and he's weird looking... but like... he ends up being so useful and he helps them a lot so he isn't all that bad*

NA: *so there's more to him than what you think?*

David: *ya... Much more.*

I've had the privilege of getting to know David really well as I was his Grade 3 teacher and I have spent a year with him as a research participant gathering data. What became clear to me is that when David started breaking down the analysis of the characters he likes, he seemed to be unconsciously describing himself. David confirmed this when I asked him who his favourite characters are in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise:

NA: *Is Jack Sparrow your favourite character?*

David: *No, Barbossa is.*

NA: *Barbossa(?) That's interesting. Why?*

David: *(...) he's not a coward and he has courage. And when he fights he like... it doesn't take any effort. And he's mad and really funny... and weird. He's very weird... and I like that he has a monkey.*

NA: *and you like his beard?*

David: **laughs* ya... and he is not the main guy so that's cool.*

NA: *what do you mean?*

David: *Like he is the side character... Will Turner and Jack Sparrow are the main guys that everybody likes... But Barbossa is like the bad guy but he's not all bad. Like he's funny and he's weird but.... he's really smart too.*

NA: **smiles* do you know someone like that?*

David: *[laughs and shifts in his chair] ya, I guess he's like me.*

It is evident that David identifies himself as being “a side line character” who is “funny” and “weird” but often misjudged and proves to be quite smart. When David began Grade 3 with me, I could tell right from the beginning that he had a quirky sense of humour and that he

would undoubtedly become the class clown within my classroom. Sure enough that is exactly what happened. He didn't seem to possess any remarkable talents in any of the subjects and his marks were considered average. However, when he wasn't trying to cause havoc in the classroom with his antics, he would often be found reading usually quite advanced books for a nine year old. Slowly as I got to know David and a mutual trust and respect was established, I was able to break down the wall of his "silly demeanour" and I realised that an extremely intelligent, creative and knowledgeable young man resided within him. Just as he described his characters, David for me was a character who I had misjudged and who was a lot more than what he had seemed. David performed as the class clown until he felt comfortable enough around me, and trusted me enough to show me another side of who he was and what he is capable of. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a central link between identity and literacy learning as people's identities mediate and are mediated by the texts they read, write, and talk about (Moje. et al, 2009: 417). We can see this with David and the characters which he uses in his stories. By reading his narrative work which constantly appropriates characters who he identifies as like him, I had come to realise that within his writing, David reveals how he sees himself in the world and how others should see him- that there's more than what is portrayed. Thus I argue that he is using his narrative writing for identity construction and also to negotiate his own positioning within his own world.

5.2.2. Luke's narrative writing: appropriating theme

Unlike David, Luke has more interest in television shows than in film, and during the time of my research he enjoyed watching the children's television channels, *Nickelodeon* and *Cartoon Network*. His favourite shows were *Ben 10*, *Pokémon*, and *Avatar, the Last Airbender*, all of which involved young teenage characters who can transform/or have animals that transform and have special powers. As mentioned in Chapter 4, *Ben 10* has been a particular favourite of Luke's from the time he was young and is possibly what ignited his interest in the fantasy genre theme of young children possessing magical powers and being part of magical worlds.

Like David, Luke began writing his own story at home, *Battle of the Elements*, after watching "*Avatar: the last Airbender*":

NA: *when did you start writing it (Battle of the Elements)?*

Luke: *I started it about last week sometime (date of interview 25-02-2015) and I started it on 'pages' but then I started using 'Book Creator' when Mrs De Sousa (the school Librarian) told me about it*

NA: *Okay, what's it about?*

Luke: *It's a... it's a big family... it starts off with a family that has 12 boys and one girl. And each starts a tribe or like a colony of a specific element.*

NA: *Okay...*

Luke: *it's difficult to name all 13 but I'll start with the easy ones. They are Air, Water, Fire, Earth, the girl is Psychic, Nature, Electric, Ice, Darkness...Light... I can't remember all of them... and... I'm not very far I am only on my eighth page.*

NA: *So what did you base your story on? Did you watch or read anything that gave you inspiration?*

Luke: *It came to me in an epiphany one day....*

NA: *okay...*

Luke: *I don't know... I have always liked the Avatar Airbender movie, Harry Potter coz there's magic in it... those type of things.....*

NA: *Ok so where does the idea of the elements come from?*

Luke: *Avatar*

NA: *Avatar? The blue guy from the movie?*

Luke: *No Avatar the Last Airbender... it's a TV show... it came from that mostly.... and also kind of Pokémon too.*

As mentioned in the transcript above, Luke's narrative, *The Battle of the Elements*, is about 13 siblings who all possess unique powers and have created their own nations. The oldest sibling who was the ruler of the Fire nation dies and a new king is elected. He has also forced the fire nation to learn evil magic. One day Phillip meets a sorcerer named William Sosoka who informs him that his brother was killed by the darkness nation. Phillip wants to avenge his brother so Sosoka teaches him to channel his powers in order to charm an animal and then take its D.N.A which will then allow him to transform into that animal and evolve the transformation. Phillip morphs into a griffin and the next day, he takes the rest of his siblings (except Daniel who is the evil king of the Darkness nation) to meet Sosoka. In the evening, Robert (who is the king of the Ice nation) has a terrifying dream- a dream about the Darkness

nation attacking the Ice nation. Sosoka states that the siblings will need training to learn how to transform and Daniel volunteers to learn how to do so first. He goes out and seeks an animal to morph into. He successfully morphs into one but is then captured by Wolfarr, Daniel's second in command. Robert is taken to Daniel, the antagonist of the narrative, who informs him that he killed their brother and that he wishes to plunge the world into war. His narrative ends just before Daniel and Robert engage in a fight.

Luke has mentioned *Avatar the Last Airbender*, *Harry Potter* and *Pokémon* as being the inspirations for his narrative and the traces of all three popular texts (with their theme of magic) are evident in his text:

Avatar the Last Airbender is set in a world which is divided into four equal powers: the Water Tribe, Earth Kingdom, Fire Nation, and Air Nomads. In each nation there is a group of gifted people known as Benders who have the ability to manipulate their native element using martial arts and elemental magic. The nations lived together peacefully until the ruler of the fire nation declared war on the other nations and the only one who can save them is a young water bender named Aang but he has to first learn how to bend all four elements. The intertextual link between this T.V. programme and Luke's narrative lies in both containing nations who have the use of elemental magic.

Magic is also a dominant theme within the *Harry Potter* series. Within this world, there are magical folk and ordinary people (termed "muggles"). The magical world exists as the normal world does: children attend school but there they learn to become wizards and witches. Within this school is a teacher named Professor McGonagall who teaches transfiguration as she has the ability to transform into cat. Luke has appropriated this theme into his narrative by making his characters transform into creatures (taking on their DNA and morphing).

Finally we can see an intertextual link between the wildly successful *Pokémon* game and *The Battle of the Elements*. The purpose of *Pokémon* is for a *Pokémon* trainer to catch *Pokémon* creatures (who have special magical powers which control different elements) and train them to battle against other trainer's *Pokémon* creatures. These creatures evolve as they are trained and win battles- becoming bigger, tougher and more powerful. This we can see in

Luke's narrative when the teacher of magic, Sosoka, tells Phillip that *"there is more to just morphing. You can also evolve your transformation"* and the use of different types of magical abilities (the elements, electricity, psychic powers, etc.)

The theme of magic, is particularly what entices Luke into these narratives, as he has stated that he would love to be able to live within such a world where he could perform magic:

Luke: *Also, the world in Harry Potter is really cool... Like how there are muggles and magical people in one world and they're like the same... they both have ministries and live their lives but there's just magic and awesome creatures in Harry's world*

NA: *which world would you want to live in?*

Luke: *The magic one definitely!*

NA: *why?*

Luke: *coz you have powers and their world just seems so awesome. Like they're ordinary people but... they're not ordinary.*

The narrative which Luke wrote at school entitled *The Escape* is set in a magical world where vampires exist as well. Luke was inspired to write this story while reading the *Skulduggery Pleasant* series.

The Escape is an action packed narrative involving two characters, Les and Alexa, who are being chased by a vampire horde. Les and Alexa possess magical powers, with Les described as having *"the strength of 100 men"* and Alexa has *"the speed of a cheetah"*. The chase is written elaborately and in great detail. Les instructs Alexa to open a portal which will rid them of the vampires but he is bitten and starts to change into a vampire himself: *"He was paling and his eyes were turning red. She ran. She looked back now and his hair was becoming as black as the shadow of a raven"*. Alexa then opens a portal by running around in a circle, using her power of speed. The portal opens and sucks in the vampires, including Les. Alexa dives into the portal to save him but he is too far gone into his transformation so she changes them both into spirits in order for them to remain together in the afterlife.

We can see in Luke's narrative that magic exists as his characters possess unique powers and this is a dominant theme within the *Skulduggery Pleasant* series as well. As mentioned in Chapter 4, within the world of *Skulduggery Pleasant* (and similar to the *Harry Potter* world), there exists both a magical community, and a non-magical community of people who aren't

aware that magic exists. This dual world is particularly attractive for Luke and he has stated that if he had to choose a magical world to live in, it would be the world in which *Skulduggery Pleasant* is set as he is attracted to the idea of magic existing in an ordinary world, where some humans can have extraordinary powers. Luke's intense enjoyment of reading this series is evidenced in the fact that at school he would often choose to sit in the library and read the books during break rather than going out to play with his friends:

NA: *Oh ok, so I've noticed that during second break you sit in the library and read?*

Luke: *Yea, at second break everybody gets all sweaty*

NA: **laughs**

Luke: *And it's so nice in the library coz there's air-conditioning and it's quiet and it's comfortable and you can just sit and read and no one will bother you*

NA: *So do you prefer reading in the library to going out and playing?*

Luke: *[Looks away and seems hesitant]... erm ... no, not really...I... erm... I... I like doing both... [Looks at me for a second and then looks away, shifts in his chair and seems uncomfortable]*

NA: *But I know you want to finish those books though, hey?*

Luke: *Ya they're like... it's one of my favourite series now. [Seems more comfortable, maintains eye contact]*

NA: *Most of the fantasy books seem to be*

Luke: *I'm in my domain when I have fantasy*

NA: *Why fantasy though?*

Luke: *I've been reading it for like 2 years now... because there's magic which I love... and secret worlds//*

NA: *// would you like to live in a secret world?*

Luke: *Ya, definitely. I would like to live in Skulduggery Pleasant's world that place is really cool and is set in Ireland, Dublin and erm... like there's different types of disciplines for magic*

NA: *so when you read the books do you imagine you're in the world?*

Luke: *Ya, I do. It's so much cooler than our world*

NA: *why's that?*

Luke: *because they're not just like normal people... There are normal people but there's also people who can do magic... it's much more exciting.*

From the above transcript it is evident that Luke is not comfortable with people thinking that he would rather read books in the library than be outside as his demeanour and posture changes when I asked him about it. He becomes more comfortable once I've suggested that it is because he wants to complete reading the books. However, the reason why he chooses to sit in the library is revealed towards the end of the transcript: when he is in the library and reading he imagines being part of the "secret magical world" which is "so much more exciting" than our regular world. Thus Luke is not simply appropriating the theme of magic and existing in a magical world, but he is conveying his desire to escape from the mundane and be a part of something greater- where human beings are able to have extraordinary capabilities and live more interesting lives. This shows a deep investment in the world created by the novels he is reading and in the world he can construct through his own story-telling.

When one considers the kind of child Luke is, it is clear to see why this theme of a magical world and children with special powers is continually appropriated in his work. Luke is an exceptionally bright child who excels academically in all subjects. From a young age, he showed a remarkable ability to grasp concepts quite early and easily and his previous teachers have always commented on how much more mature and wise he is for his age compared to his peers. Luke is aware that he is academically bright and has admitted to me that there isn't a subject at school which really challenges him. His peers are aware of his talents as well and will often state that they know that Luke will acquire one of the top marks within the grade, something which often embarrasses him. As a result, he often feels bored at school and unstimulated because many of the tasks don't require too much effort from him. Furthermore many of his friends do not share his interests. His mother has also reported that he had asked her if he could be placed in an all-boys school as there is a greater possibility to meet "more boys like him". These may provide the reasons that he enjoys reading fantasy books as much as he does and why he is often found in the library during break time: It allows him an opportunity to escape his ordinary world and be able to immerse himself in a world which is completely different and more challenging than his own, where having a super power is natural and is not something that can isolate him, as his intelligence might do in his own world. In his eyes our world is just too limiting for a boy like him.

David and Luke's narratives provide evidence for why they are both considered top performers: their genre knowledge is excellent. Their narratives hook the reader from the

beginning paragraph and their writing is rich in detail: their characters are well-developed and the pace of their writing keeps the reader entertained and wanting to read more. It is also evident that both children are strongly influenced by popular culture when they are appropriating certain aspects of what they read and watch into their narratives. According to Lensmire and Beals (1994:411), Bakhtin's notion of appropriation and Kristeva's notion of intertextuality offer us a potentially powerful means for theorising the development of discourse abilities. With regards to literacy development, there are many features of discourse that children acquire: they discover which genres work in different situations, and they learn to select the appropriate words, forms, and themes that accompany these genres. Furthermore people appropriate not only forms, but content: words, topics, themes, purposes and styles (Lensmire & Beals, 1994: 412). A large part of this content is derived through popular culture texts and media. This insight isn't new as popular culture being used as a resource in literacy has been a topic of debate for the past several decades (Dyson, 1993; 1997; 2001a; 2001b; 2003). It is known that children bring a range of influences and resources to bear on their writing as they build on and incorporate the knowledge they develop from their experiences with the multiple genre worlds they encounter in books, comics, films, videos, DVDs, and on television (Feiler & al, 2007: 8). What is interesting, however, is the reason why certain aspects of these genres are appropriated in their writing. In both cases, the boys are using resources from popular culture to show aspects of their identity. For David this seems to be a way of performing particular kinds of identity, possibly sending a message about his mistaken identity. For Luke, it provides an opportunity to explore the struggle to exist in a community in which he doesn't quite feel that he fits. Ivanic (1998) has stated that writing is not just about "content" but it's also a representation of the self. This we can see is true for both Luke and David.

5.3. Conclusion

"It is a messy proposition to identify topics and themes that people choose to talk and write about... but to ignore such aspects of discourse development is to restrict our vision of what children are doing when they learn to speak and write. We risk ignoring the very reason that children (and we) speak and write: to express something to someone else."

{Lensmire & Beals, 1994: 423}

I recently attended a primary school writing seminar for teachers where the facilitator divided us into groups and instructed us to discuss what problems we are finding in our classes with regards to children and their narrative writing. Most of the comments seemed to be around assessment and time allocation, both of which I do think are valid concerns. However, there was one particular comment which I believe is important to discuss as it pertains to this chapter.

One of the educators questioned the continuous use of popular culture in her children's writing. She was concerned that the boys in her class (age 8-9) always seem to have certain characters (e.g. superheroes from the popular *Marvel* comics) and certain plot lines in their stories and that their writing wasn't "more original." She stated in frustration that whatever she tried to do, whatever genre was given, the boys in her class would steer towards their own interests. The seminar convenor listened to her and agreed, and remarked that unfortunately children these days are exposed to more "bad literature" and "bad stimuli" and that is why these characters and plot lines will keep popping up. She insisted that we, as teachers who are trying to instil 'proper' writing into our children, should continue to try and steer them away from such influences.

What struck me the most from their conversation was not the educator's desire for her boys to be more original as I've heard similar conversations from other educators during my teaching years, but rather that the seminar convenor considered the children's interests as being influenced by "bad literature" and "bad stimuli" and her suggestion that these influences have no place in their narrative writing. Furthermore, there were many educators who agreed with her.

This is problematic considering that many educators do think this way and that research suggests differently. Research has shown that children need to write about what they know and that when given the opportunity, they choose to write about their ruling passions (Barton and Hamilton, 1998: 83). Over the past two decades, research drawing on socio-cultural theories has indicated how popular culture and media inform children's literacy learning, given that these are dominant across children's lives (Marsh, 2010: 14). Dyson's body of work

(1993; 1997; 2003a; 2003b; 2013) illustrates how young children's writing development is informed by their social relationships in which peers draw on popular cultural resources in their play and writing. Thus, popular culture is not something that can be ignored, nor should it be. It is socially embedded in our everyday lives and forms a large part of our social activity.

Furthermore, the analysis of children's writing in this chapter has shown that rather than asserting the continual use of popular culture, it is more meaningful to determine how and why these resources are being appropriated. My research with Luke and David shows how their appropriation of particular elements from popular culture enriches their narrative writing thus providing evidence of their creativity and mastery of genre conventions and character development among other things. In Lensmire and Beals' study (1994), they found this particularly useful as they discovered that through their participant's appropriation of a book which was particularly significant to her, her writing revealed the relationships within her family and the peer culture within her school.

Creative writing is widely seen as a form of expression, which draws directly from the imagination to convey meaning (Mendelowitz, 2014: 166; Vygotsky, 2004: 9). According to Lensmire & Beals (1994) and Dyson (1992), part of the pleasure children derive from narrative writing is related to their chance to "build their own worlds"- to explain for themselves, in their writing, what their social world is like and/or should be like. Creative writing can allow children to express personal visions of the world and their place in it. Britton (1982 as cited by Lensmire & Beals, 1994) suggests that this opportunity to build their own worlds might be especially significant to children as they gain more and more experience in the world, and learn increasingly about their place in it. For David he is representing his own identity in his community within his writing while Luke is demonstrating his desire to fit in within his existing community.

The link between writing and identity is clearly evident. Research drawing from literacy-and-identity studies examine the roles of texts and literacy practices as tools or media for constructing, narrating, mediating, enacting, performing, enlisting, or exploring identities and has found that what children choose to read and write is strongly linked to their identity (Moje et.al, 2009: 417). We have seen this in David's appropriation of his characters and Luke's appropriation of the theme of magic. Thus children like David and Luke are telling us about

themselves as they are telling their stories. Their writing has provided them with an opportunity to construct their identities. Therefore rather than criticizing the appropriation of popular culture in their work, it should be our goal as educators to read between their lines and discover what these children are trying to say, to identify what is in the meanings they are trying to express to us so that we might better understand our learners.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1. Overview of the study

In the form of a case study, this research investigated the out of school literacy practices and semiotic resources of two top performing young creative writers. The theoretical framework for this research is drawn from the sociocultural perspective on literacy and New Literacy Studies. Using these frameworks enabled me to identify conventional literacy practices (e.g. story reading) and semiotic resources which are largely studied through the emergent literacy paradigm (drawing and fantasy play). The two boys participating in this research were in Grade 4 and they attend an upper middle class private school in the Western Cape. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews during school time, and from home visits with each boy. The interviews were recorded and field notes were taken. Two pieces of writing were collected from each child. Additionally, their mothers' completed questionnaires about the family literacy history. The data was organised into tables initially to describe literacy practices and semiotic resources, and then to determine which practices and resources contributed to their creative writing. Furthermore, I used Bahktin's notion of 'appropriation' and Kristeva's notion of 'intertextuality' in the analysis of the boy's written texts to trace their use of popular culture.

6.2. Reflections on the findings

6.2.1. Family literacy practices

The home environment provides a plethora of information about the way in which children acquire and use literacy. Comber and Kamler's study (2004) has shown that when a teacher enters the home of their learners as researcher, it enables him/her to gather unexpected data which wouldn't have been possible in a school setting. The researcher is able to develop a deeper understanding of their participants; they gain greater insight into the way their subjects think, what they enjoy doing, and why they choose these particular activities.

This is certainly true for my study. From my home visits with David and Luke I could see that many literacy practices occurred naturally within their homes. The adults in their life did not

set out to teach their children certain kinds of literacy; rather they socialised them into what they deemed as being important practices. Reading, drawing, and fantasy play, are all frequent activities within their families and through these practices, the boys are learning how to use literacy in a multitude of ways, and are being socialised into what it means to be a member of their family and their community.

What I found most interesting is that book reading is not the only stimuli for children's creative writing as drawing and fantasy play as well as film have emerged as important semiotic resources with regards to the boy's creativity. Drawing (Kennedy et al, 2012; Makin & Diaz, 2002) and play (Singer & Singer, 1990, 2005, 2010; Christie, 1998, 2013) are usually considered far more significant within pre-school emerging literacy practices whereas reading and writing are seen as the dominant practices within formal schooling and for school going children. However, these practices have also proven to be a stimulus to other literacy practices in which David and Luke are interested. From my perspective as a Grade 3 educator, I know that the majority of the children in my class, and many children who are in higher grades, still enjoy drawing and engaging in fantasy play. Usually during the last week of term, I allow my class to engage in "creativity time"- an hour set aside where they are allowed to partake in any creative task they prefer. The majority of the boys in my class will actively choose to draw illustrations and they delight in telling me what they have drawn and the narrative that goes along with their illustrations. The imaginative world which they have created and illustrated is then further brought to life when they're playing during their break time. These practices are vitally important to them and should be seen as being as significant as writing a narrative would. These meaning-making practices are stimulating creativity and therefore, should be acknowledged as powerful resources for creative writing in formal schooling.

6.2.2. The use of popular culture within children's creative writing

I had expected that popular culture would appear in my participants' creative writing as it is known that children write about what they are interested in. However, I hadn't realised how negatively popular culture is viewed amongst many teachers by whom it is seen to encourage unoriginality and the use of "bad literature."

Yet this is not what I found in my study. My analysis of the boy's engagement with and use of popular culture in their writing has enabled me to understand my participants more deeply than I had before. Through David and Luke's use of appropriation and intertextuality, their creative writing granted me access into their minds and opened a door into their own worlds and their thoughts and ideas about who they are- not only as writers, but as ordinary children as well. David's interest in anti-hero characters echoes the way in which he views himself. Luke's love of magical worlds sends the message that he feels like an outsider within his own community and seeks to fit in within a world where being exceptional is encouraged and is the norm. Ivanic (1998) has stated that writing is a representation of the self and we see this within David and Luke's narratives. Their writing provides evidence of the strong relationship between literacy and identity (McKinney and Norton, 2008; Ivanic, 1998; Moje et al, 2009) as writing affords the writer with an opportunity to portray and express how they see themselves. From a school point of view, this is of great value as it is a further way for teachers to get to know and understand the children whom they teach.

Thus, this study has shown that instead of critiquing the use of popular culture, one should rather change the question to *why* and *how* popular culture is being used as it would lead to much deeper answers, and acknowledge its power: Research has shown the prominence of popular culture in children's texts (Dyson, 1992, 2003, 2010; Marsh, 2006) as writing becomes easier and more successful when children are encouraged to write on a topic that they are able to connect with (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Vygotsky, 2004). What is meaningful to children is what is relevant to their lives as Dyson explains, "their experiences with written language are shaped by cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic factors, along with personal interests... their meaning-making and learning is informed by their sense of what is relevant to them" (2010: 25). By appropriating popular culture texts into their writing, young children aren't always simply 'copying' or producing unoriginal work which has no value. They are sharing information about themselves by drawing on resources which are familiar, relevant and of interest to them. Furthermore, it can be argued that not only is popular culture a resource for meaning-making, but that the appropriation of elements of popular culture can provide evidence of children's ability and skill to master aspects of creative writing (genre, character development, pace). Thus instead of viewing evidence of intertextuality within

children's writing as lacking creativity, it can be viewed as evidence of the writer being highly literate and as signs of being a highly skilled writer.

6.3. Limitations of my study

The findings of this study cannot be generalised. The study was carried out with English mother tongue speaking children from upper middle class homes. These children attend a mixed gender private school in a predominantly English suburb within the Western Cape. Due to their affluent backgrounds, they have access to resources and technology which less fortunate children do not. Children from different socio-economic backgrounds are likely to present different findings.

6.4. Recommendations for further research

More detailed research needs to be carried out in order to establish the use of drawing and fantasy play as stimuli towards children's creative writing, especially for children who are no longer in the emergent literacy phase, but rather moving through the formal schooling system.

Furthermore, more emphasis and research needs to be placed on creative writing in South African schools as there is a serious lack of research on children's writing (Mendelowitz, 2014: 165). South African researcher Mendelowitz has highlighted that one of the key elements that creates or limits creative writing is the teachers' conceptualisation of imagination and what constitutes creative writing (2014: 181). Teachers' attitude towards creative writing are translated into the classroom. Further research on creative writing in schools could show the value of creative writing in educational contexts. Far more than simply a means of teaching and assessing grammatical skills and phonetic knowledge, writing can foreground creativity, the use of the imagination, and enable children to explore both their official and unofficial worlds.

APPENDIX 1: "Six traits of writing" rubric

Written Language

Name: _____

Date: _____

6-trait assessment rubric for beginning writers	Exceeds <u>experienced</u> Shows control and skill; many strengths present	Achieve <u>capable</u> Competent ; strengths outweigh weaknesses	Developing <u>developing/</u> <u>emerging</u> Need for revision outweighs strengths; isolated hints of what the writer has in mind	Needs <u>Attention</u> <u>experimenting</u> A beginning writer not showing any control
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh/original ideas Focused topic Clearly developed ideas Interesting detail Understands topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing tells a story Generally on topic Appropriate title if required Some detail, but not developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts a story Meaning of general idea is recognisable Some ideas present, but still fuzzy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes no attempt at writing Still needs to dictate sentences to teacher Communicates ideas through pictures
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catchy opening Transitions connect main ideas Attempt at effective ending Easy to follow Important ideas stand out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logical sequencing of sentences Key ideas begin to surface Effective beginning Attempts transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts at sequencing Attempts transitions Uses "the end" Finds it difficult to stay on the topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No sense of beginning and end Connection between ideas confusing
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point of view evident Clear sense of audience Elicits emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual Expressive Attempts personal point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some predictable feelings Moments of sparkle Limited connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear response No awareness of audience Similar to everyone
Word choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vivid images Precise, accurate, fresh, original words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses familiar words correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settles for some general words that will do, but no attempt at originality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writes strings of letters Sometimes recognisable words Attempts phrases

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts figurative language • No slang, repetition or over-used expressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts to use new words • Attempts some descriptive words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses slang • Pads writing with repetition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finds it difficult to convey thoughts logically
Sentence fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct sentence structure • Uses complex sentences at times • Variety of sentence beginnings • Good rhythm • Good flow • Dialogue used correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct and creative • Some sentences begin differently • Attempt at dialogue can be understood • Makes longer sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple sentences • All begin the same • Reader has to reread for meaning • Experimenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts simple sentences • Sort repetitive sentence patterns • Displays a lot of insecurity • Needs individual help and scribing
Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all words are spelt correctly • Effective use of dictionary • Punctuation is correct • Attempts at good grammar • Attempts at paragraphs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most familiar words and high frequency words are spelt correctly • Unfamiliar words can be accessed in dictionary or class room • Most punctuation is used correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses phonetic spelling • Spelling of high frequency words erratic • Attempt is made to find words, but not too successful yet • End punctuation used erratically • Capitals to start sentences used erratically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts left to right • Attempts spacing • Attempts standard letters • Mixes upper and lower case • Random punctuation • Student needs to interpret own writing and pictures

APPENDIX 2: Parent's Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible and provide as much detail as you can. All information is strictly confidential and will only be discussed in relation to the research study between the researcher and supervisor. Pseudonyms will be used.

These questions are asked to provide a framework of your child's early childhood literacy practices and your own beliefs about their writing.

Early childhood (0-6yrs)

1. From what age did you start reading to your child?
2. How did you choose which books to read to him?
.
3. What genre of books did he enjoy the most growing up? You may mention specific titles as well.
4. Did you use any reading strategies with him whilst reading? For example did you ask him any questions about the story... spot differences, explain what is happening in the picture etc. Please provide an example if you can.
5. At what age did he start reading on his own? (reading along with you is acceptable as well)
6. Children do go through phases as they grow up but were there specific toys that he enjoyed playing with more than others and what were they?
7. Did your child enjoy dressing up? If so, please list some of the characters.
8. Does your child **currently** enjoy dressing up or playing with certain toys?

9. Did your child attend any preschools? Please supply the name of the school.

Creative Writing

1. At what age/grade did your child show an interest in writing?
2. Do you believe that your child is gifted when it comes to creative writing?
3. In what ways do you show your support in his interest in writing?
4. Are there any particular stories that he has written that you have really enjoyed reading?
5. What do you think are the major influences that are apparent in his creative writing?

Additional Comments

Feel free to comment on anything else that you think would be important for the researcher to know.

APPENDIX 3: Data table depicting David and Luke's out of school literacy practices and semiotic resources

Reading at home independently (reading for pleasure)

David	Luke
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads independently before bedtime, usually books that he has taken out of the library Currently reading Harry Potter Rereads favourite books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads independently before bedtime, usually books he has taken out from the library Rereads favourite books Currently reading Skulduggery Pleasant

Being read to (family routine- social practice of family)

David	Luke
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> His mother reads a non-fiction book that they can discuss (History of the World) David is very interested in History and how the world works Reading the Narnia books again with his grandmother She reads it to him as a bedtime story when his mother is away travelling for business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> His mom is reading the Harry Potter series to him. They have read all the books together. "Read that children's love for reading wanes by Grade 4 and that is normally when parents stop reading to them."

Drawing pictures

David
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Really enjoys sketching pictures Loves drawing during his weekend. Works on old pictures and starts new ones. Has drawn a world map and comes up with countries and adds them to his map or takes away some if he needs space Wants to sketch pictures for his friend's book Mom drew him a crest when he was bored in the car for his Minecraft world called "Williameria" Has drawn all the characters for his book and the has done the book cover Pictures he has drawn for the characters of his story look similar to existing characters.

• **Television shows and Movies**

David	Luke
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He really enjoys watching movies and tv • His favourite movies are POTC, the Narnia movies, Star Wars, and the Lone Ranger • Big fan of Johnny Depp- dressed as him for a party. • POTC heavily influenced the story he is writing • Aspects of Narnia, LOTR and Harry Potter in his other stories • Aware that his stories are inspired by movies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't watch that many movies or tv • Enjoys the Harry Potter movies • Enjoys watching Avatar the Last Airbender on Nick Jr • Influenced the story that he is writing. • He is aware that his stories are inspired due to the tv show

• **Fantasy play and Games**

David	Luke
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favourite books are the Narnia series (Prince Caspian), Percy Jackson (The Last Olympian), Heroes of Olympus (Mark of Athena), The Faraway Tree, and Baboon goes to the Moon • Dressed up as a character from Narnia for World Book Day Reepy Cheep • Has a huge interest in Greek/Roman mythology • Favourite mythical creatures tend to appear frequently in stories: Dwarves, giant lizards and centaurs. <p>Toys and Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gandalf the Grey (loves Gandalf the Grey because he isn't as powerful so he can still make mistakes and grow). • Roman and Greek warrior toys he got from Greece. • Knight figurines at his dad's place that he used to play with with his brothers • Has a drawer filled with dress up clothing • Pirate treasure box that has coins inside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has acted out a scene while playing outside • Had his cricket glove and bat with him and he re-enacted a fight scene from his story • Play fantasy games during break at school • Favourite books are the Harry Potter series, Roald Dahl books, Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Secret Seven • Dressed up as Harry Potter for World Book Day <p>Toys and Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pokemon cards • Skylanders • Ben 10

APPENDIX 4: DAVID'S LIBRARY RECORD

³ 06/0800 ³ Quidditch through the ages	ROW ³ 20/07/2015 ³ 04/11/2015 ³
³ 14/0254 ³ Jedi battles	STA ³ 28/05/2015 ³ 22/07/2015 ³
³ 11/0616 ³ Skulduggery Pleasant	LAN ³ 26/05/2015 ³ 28/05/2015 ³
³ 04/0476 ³ Harry Potter and the chamber of secrets	ROW ³ 18/05/2015 ³ 22/07/2015 ³
³ 15/0125 ³ Percy Jackson and the Greek gods	RIO ³ 04/05/2015 ³ 19/05/2015 ³
³ 04/1037 ³ Harry Potter and the philosopher's stone	ROW ³ 20/04/2015 ³ 22/07/2015 ³
³ 15/0297 ³ Danny the champion of the world	DAH ³ 15/04/2015 ³ 28/05/2015 ³
³ 03/1132 ³ Friend or foe	MOR ³ 21/01/2015 ³ 04/02/2015 ³
³ 09/0935 ³ Welcome to India	CON ³ 09/10/2014 ³ 19/11/2014 ³
³ 14/0248 ³ House of Hades, The	RIO ³ 06/10/2014 ³ 24/11/2014 ³
³ 08/1429 ³ Vipero : snake man	BLA ³ 23/06/2014 ³ 18/08/2014 ³
³ 09/1187 ³ How to ride a dragon's storm	COW ³ 23/06/2014 ³ 18/08/2014 ³
³ 11/0606 ³ Koron : jaws of death	BLA ³ 03/06/2014 ³ 20/06/2014 ³
³ 12/0103 ³ Ursus : the clawed roar	BLA ³ 03/06/2014 ³ 20/06/2014 ³
³ 13/1656 ³ Clone wars - Episode guide	FRY ³ 29/05/2014 ³ 03/06/2014 ³
³ 13/0034 ³ Hero's guide to deadly dragons, A	COW ³ 26/05/2014 ³ 29/05/2014 ³
³ 07/1112 ³ Summer of the sea serpent	OSB ³ 20/05/2014 ³ 26/05/2014 ³
³ 14/0166 ³ Are Ewoks scared of stormtroopers?	SAU ³ 20/05/2014 ³ 26/05/2014 ³
³ 13/0759 ³ Obi-wan kenobi jedi knight	SAU ³ 19/05/2014 ³ 20/05/2014 ³
³ 13/0659 ³ How to seize a dragon's jewel	COW ³ 12/05/2014 ³ 19/05/2014 ³
³ 11/0644 ³ Mighty Mount Kilimanjaro	STI ³ 06/05/2014 ³ 12/05/2014 ³
³ 13/0489 ³ Mr Gum in the hound of lamonic bibbe	STA ³ 06/05/2014 ³ 12/05/2014 ³
³ 08/1437 ³ Arachnid : king of spiders	BLA ³ 05/05/2014 ³ 06/05/2014 ³
³ 10/0108 ³ hawkite : arrow of the air	BLA ³ 05/05/2014 ³ 06/05/2014 ³
³ 11/0947 ³ Lost treasure of the emerald eye	STI ³ 14/04/2014 ³ 05/05/2014 ³
³ 10/1017 ³ Komodo : the lizard king	BLA ³ 17/03/2014 ³ 14/04/2014 ³
³ 11/0355 ³ Murk: the swamp man	BLA ³ 17/03/2014 ³ 14/04/2014 ³
³ 10/0159 ³ Rokk : the walking mountain	BLA ³ 12/03/2014 ³ 17/03/2014 ³
³ 13/1684 ³ Torgor : the minotaur	BLA ³ 12/03/2014 ³ 17/03/2014 ³
³ 09/1250 ³ Blaze : ice dragon	BLA ³ 10/03/2014 ³ 12/03/2014 ³

APPENDIX 5: LUKE'S LIBRARY RECORD

³ 07/1305 ³ Harry Potter and the deathly hallows	ROW ³ 11/11/2015 ³ 28/04/2016 ³
³ 08/1439 ³ Percy Jackson and the battle of the	RIO ³ 29/10/2015 ³ 05/02/2016 ³
³ 13/0062 ³ Diary of a wimpy kid - the third whe	KIN ³ 28/10/2015 ³ 17/11/2015 ³
³ 14/0687 ³ Diary of a wimpy kid the last straw	KIN ³ 21/10/2015 ³ 28/10/2015 ³
³ 14/0691 ³ Diary of a wimpy kid the ugly truth	KIN ³ 21/10/2015 ³ 28/10/2015 ³
³ 15/0437 ³ Faceless ones, The	LAN ³ 27/07/2015 ³ 28/10/2015 ³
³ 14/0511 ³ Last stand of dead men	LAN ³ 21/07/2015 ³ 28/10/2015 ³
³ 15/0419 ³ Skulduggery Pleasant Armageddon out	LAN ³ 17/06/2015 ³ 02/12/2015 ³
³ 13/0095 ³ Skulduggery Pleasant kingdom of the	LAN ³ 03/06/2015 ³ 22/07/2015 ³
³ 12/0076 ³ Skulduggery Pleasant Death bringer	LAN ³ 27/05/2015 ³ 22/07/2015 ³
³ 11/1060 ³ Skulduggery Pleasant Mortal coil	LAN ³ 20/05/2015 ³ 17/06/2015 ³
³ 09/0635 ³ Dandy 2001	DAN ³ 13/05/2015 ³ 21/05/2015 ³
³ 11/0615 ³ Skulduggery Pleasant dark days	LAN ³ 13/05/2015 ³ 17/06/2015 ³
³ 10/1262 ³ Skulduggery Pleasant the faceless on	LAN ³ 04/05/2015 ³ 13/05/2015 ³
³ 10/1260 ³ Skulduggery Pleasant playing with fi	LAN ³ 28/04/2015 ³ 12/05/2015 ³
³ 11/0616 ³ Skulduggery Pleasant	LAN ³ 15/04/2015 ³ 04/05/2015 ³
³ 14/0616 ³ Danny the champion of the world	DAH ³ 15/04/2015 ³ 13/05/2015 ³
³ 03/0552 ³ Hobbit, The	TOL ³ 11/02/2015 ³ 16/04/2015 ³
³ 13/0163 ³ Gods and warriors	PAV ³ 21/01/2015 ³ 11/02/2015 ³
³ 04/0964 ³ Harry Potter and the order of the ph	ROW ³ 17/11/2014 ³ 08/05/2015 ³
³ 08/0257 ³ Pakistan	KHA ³ 09/10/2014 ³ 17/11/2014 ³
³ 09/0558 ³ Shore Road Mystery, The	DIX ³ 18/08/2014 ³ 17/11/2014 ³
³ 07/1003 ³ Percy Jackson and the Titan's curse	RIO ³ 22/07/2014 ³ 17/11/2014 ³
³ 01/0214 ³ Harry Potter and the goblet of fire	ROW ³ 23/06/2014 ³ 17/11/2014 ³
³ 10/0961 ³ Percy Jackson and the sea of monster	RIO ³ 02/06/2014 ³ 22/07/2014 ³
³ 11/1152 ³ Percy Jackson and the Olympians :	RIO ³ 05/05/2014 ³ 22/07/2014 ³
³ 04/0474 ³ Harry Potter and the prisoner of	ROW ³ 25/04/2014 ³ 18/08/2014 ³

APPENDIX 6: David's unedited narrative "*Sea Farers*"

Chapter 1

1894- Somewhere in the middle of the Indian ocean

The storm hit at midnight.

The sails couldn't bare the might of the wind and the water was washing men off the deck by the second.

William's father told him to take his sister, Emily and his brother James who was only three months old below deck. Then lightning hit the ship. William knew they had to get to the life boats.

But when they got there there was only one left. They got in but at that moment a wave hit their boat and William's vision went blank.

Chapter 2

1914-Port Isilton

"Percher! The Comodor is expecting 50 swords not 15[,] 50! You can't keep breaking them by mistake!

Look James. I'm being harsh on you because you are very skilled. Didn't you see the sword you made for the Comodor himself? These swords don't have to be nice. They are just spares for the new recruits."

James had been working for Mr Brown for 17years, ever since he was found as a baby on some drift wood. The governor declared that he was to with with Mr Brown the blacksmith and he worked for him since the age of three.

James and Mr Brown lived in Port Isilton a small island of the coast of North Africa wich was governed by Gerander Goose. Gerander Goose was a pompas little man who always tried to look important. He wore a buttend up wastecoast, pointy black shoes, a top hat, and he always carried a silver walking stick. The only reason he was even chosen to be Governer was because his father was a very good one. But it turned out that his son wasn't.

Then there was Sewan a Frenchman who csme to Port Isilton to become a tailor. Next to the tairlor shop was Dusgies Pub wich was oned by Mr Floyd Brandyouck who encase his customers got a bit rioty kept a rifel under the counter. Then there was Comodor Eustace who was the protector of Port Isilton and a very onerable man. He heroicly defeated the evil pirate captain John Guartez. After Gaurtez's ship was destroyed he and his remainder of his crew fled to the shore and have lived on Port Isilton in a secret hid out that Eustace cant find for the past 20 years. Every now and then they come out and steal something.

And now for the last charecters. I am going to tell you about Adam Levis. A hobo who lived on the beaches of Port Isilton who lives in a shack of old drift wood and does nothing all day but drink rum. There are even roomers of him once being part of Guartez's crew.

Jameses shift had ended and he went upstairs and sunk into his old mouldy bed and he looked at the bronze locket around his neck. It had a picture of his brother, sister, father and

a baby who must have been him at the time. He knew that if he met one of them he would know them but he didn't let himself believe that any of them were still alive.

That night James woke to yelling. He looked outside and saw fire everywhere. He saw a group of ruggid men run pass and shoot someone. James couldn't quite make out who. He had known that there were pirates hiding out in the mountains but they had never done anything this bad. James grabbed his cuttles and ran outside to help. He had fought about 4 pirates when he saw something peculiar. A girl that looked very familiar. Then he looked at his locket. The resemblance was uncanny. He looked again. It had to be her. He was about to go after her when a scary mean looking man came out of the shadows and said to the girl come! In a stern voice. He ran after them calling wait! Wait! Then he saw them jump on a ship they had taken control of and set sail.

APPENDIX 7: David's unedited narrative *"One Big Hourglass"*

26 May 2015 **"One Big Hourglass"**

Equal woke up in a cold sweat. That was the fourth bad dream that week. Every night that week he had had the same dream. A dream about a boy screaming in pain and horror as all the joy and warmth was drained from the air. He had only told his brother Nariken about these dreams.

Equal and Nariken lived with their aunt and uncle in a small oasis in the middle of a desert called the Dornay. Aunt Nenga was a kind, plump little woman who had a huge fascination with moss. There there was uncle Floch who had been a farmer all his life but also loved to gamble. One of these gambling sessions won him a slave... but this was no ordinary slave. This was a desert nymph called Muggwump. Muggwump had dry baige skin with sandy curly hair and beard, with nothing to wear but a loin cloth. He could fight as well. He could fire a bow fairly well and used a spear like a master. Nariken also had a pet raven called Shen, a one legged bird who had an extreme sense for treasure. I know what you're thinking. All ravens like shiny things but this was different. Whenever there was a coin (chalice?) of gold, silver or bronze nearby he would go ballistic.

One day uncle Floch told Equal and Nariken to go outside for the day and told Muggwump to go with them. They were walking when Shen started to squak crazily and flap his wings. What's wrong with him? asked Equal.
I don't know. He usually does this when he finds wealth but never this loudly.
Then all of a sudden the floor opened under their feet revealing a staircase going underground.

Masters I think we should start heading back home.
Oh, dry up Muggwump. Where's your sense of adventure?
As they walked down the staircase they came across 4 rings and above them were the words- put these on if you wish to stay in time. They put the rings on and continued down. They came to a cave and Shen almost had had a heart attack because right before their eyes were mounds and mounds of treasure with a fat little dwarf sitting on top. The door they had come through sealed shut. The dwarf had a nasty grin on his face.

To be continued.

So kids listen to your elders because maybe if they had listened to Muggwump they wouldn't be in a sticky situation.

APPENDIX 8: Luke's unedited narrative "The Battle of the Elements"

CHAPTER ONE

There was once a family that was a very wealthy and it was made up of twelve boys and one girl. Each had different interests. The first and oldest one liked fire, the second oldest preferred magic and the third in line loved darkness. The fourth boy adored ice and everything to do with it. Fifth in line was a boy that chose electricity. Sixth in line was a fire up water boy. Seventh was a peaceful, graceful and eager air person. Eighth was an earth phenomenon. Ninth was a skilled blacksmith and a super metal man. Tenth was an eager time boy. Eleventh was a nature and grass adorer. Twelfth a very small boy who liked light. Last of all was the girl who had psychic powers.

One day there was a great row and they all decided to go separate ways; all thirteen of them went a different way. Some went east, some north, some south and some west. In about six years, each had a big nation all to themselves. They never talked to each other until the oldest boy and the leader of the fire tribe died and the new king was elected.

This king was not a good man. He forced all of the fire nation to learn dark fire battling.

One day, Phillip came across an old traveller who taught him beyond just playing with an element. "Are you telling me that you can do more than play with an element?"

"Of course you're telling me that you and your siblings have been so blind as not to ever try and copy an animal's D.N.A."

"Well, yeah," he said in an awkward tone.

"But it is a very painful process. You have to channel your element into an animal's D.N.A and you will morph. But there is something I must tell you. It was not an accident that your older brother died. He was murdered by the dangerous darkness dwellers!"

"What? I'm going to learn to fight with morphing powers to avenge my brother!"

"Sorcerer supreme, sorcerer supreme! Come quick! Come quick!"

"What is it, Ronald?" he said in an annoyed voice. "Don't mind him, Phillip. He's a trainee in the noble art of sorcery," the man whispered in a hushed tone.

"Okay," Phillip replied in an awestruck voice.

He had just realised that this man was the great teacher of noble arts, William Sosoka.

"Please, oh great sorcerer William Sosoka, teach me how to morph into an amazing beast."

"If you insist, young one, but as I said before, it will be painful."

"I'm ready. Follow my lead," called William "and channel your element. It will be easy for you to pick up because you have the same element as me."

"If you say so, William, if you say so."

One, two, three. Suddenly, William turned into a gigantic owl with huge bulging purple eyes and a beak as black as ash and feathers as purple as magic itself.

They were in the land of Volceron which was a volcanic city. Volceron's inhabitants are griffons, phoenix, lava snakes, and pyrophant.

Phillip saw a fierce-looking griffon. "What do I do?" asked Phillip.

"Well, perform something that will charm it. Then it will let you take its D.N.A," Sosoka aid in an impatient voice.

Phillip showed it sparks and his element magic suddenly, as if by magic, turned purple and started flowing. Its eyes were now luminous yellow (not at all how it looked before). Before it had looked white and blank.

"Well done, Phillip" called William Sosoka.

"Wow, it's beautiful," Phillip gasped.

"Now all you have to do is focus really hard," Phillip heard William say.

"Easier said than done," Phillip muttered to himself. He concentrated really hard and felt a burning in his toes. It was now coming to his feet and ankles, his legs his stomach, his chest, his neck and finally his head. He felt hot and sweaty but he felt different. His shoes were too big for him, his pants were too small for him and his skin felt furry. And then he felt an excruciatingly painful shock in his spine. It was bending forwards. Suddenly his clothes tore and standing there, was a magic griffon.

"Well done, Phillip!" Sosoka yelled. "But there is something that is interesting to tell you and it is that there is more to just morphing. You can also evolve your transformation."

"That's amazing," Phillip breathed.

"Oh, would you look at the time? It's already ten o'clock so I'd better get moving." William was indeed tired.

"Well, when can I see you again?" Phillip asked hopefully.

"At tomorrow morning at seven."

"It's settled then. See you then. But wait. Where will I meet you?" asked Phillip.

"You will find my cottage if you carry on west and I ask that you bring all of your brothers except Daniel." (who was leader of the darkness alliance.)

So the next morning at quarter to seven, all were up except Daniel and when they arrived at Sosoka's cottage, they smelt stew.

Ratatatat

"Come in!" called Sosoka.

"Let me introduce Robert, Allan, Bill, Harry, Joseph, Dylan, Jonathan, Ethan and Rebecca."

"Big family. Luckily I made lots of stew. Well, dig in," proposed Sosoka.

Dylan took a sip. "THIS IS THE BEST STEW EVER!!!" screamed Dylan. "What's your secret ingredient?"

"I'll never tell," muttered Sosoka. Five minutes later, everybody was on their third helping.

"No, seriously, what is your secret ingredient?" pleaded Jonathan.

"Well, if you must know, it's frogs' tongues."

There was a loud "What?" and everyone spat out their stew!

"Oh, well. Don't be alarmed. They are fresh from the swamp of Elteron," said poor old Sosoka. (This made matters much worse because the swamp of Elteron was a very ugly, deadly and poisonous.) "Well getting back to the point, you are all here to learn how to morph. Well, your older brother Phillip has already learnt and has become a wonderful and utterly rare griffon and mind you, griffons are mighty hard to train and are very dangerous and powerful."

There were a couple of oooos and aaaaaaaaas but everyone was gobsmacked because Phillip had transformed into the magnificent griffon of the magic element and Sosoka became an owl whose feathers were glinting in the moonlight.

"How did I do it you ask?" tooted Sosoka. "Well I'm sure Phillip will be more than delighted to explain."

That night Robert had a dream that he was ice skating on ice as blue as the sky and as shiny as metal. But suddenly the ice turned black and it was so black that it felt fake but he knew it was real. He fell in and woke up with a start. He was soaked with sweat.

Everyone was around him muttering and a wet towel was on his forehead. He was panting and was so scared. It had all seemed so real.

"Are you okay, Rob?" asked Dylan.

But when Robert tried to respond, all that came out of his mouth was a pathetic grunt.

"We need to call Sosoka," panicked Rebecca.

"Ah!" they all gasped with a jolt and Robert sat up out of bed and fainted.

Once Robert awoke he saw all his siblings and Sosoka. Sosoka looked concerned and petrified. "Now, Robert, I want you to tell me everything that happened in your dream or should I call it vision."

"Well, it was first a very pleasant dream and then it all went wrong. I was ice skating on ice as smooth as water and as shiny as metal and then something weird happened. The ice suddenly turned black and I felt afraid to move. I fell in and that is all."

A thought suddenly occurred to him. He had the dream again but it was different. It was all the same until he fell in. Before he fell in, he saw a hooded figure whose laugh was as spine-chilling as a cat scratching a chalk board. It was shrill and evil. This figure had opened the abyss and caused Robert to fall in.

"I was afraid something like this would happen," muttered Sosoka.

"What...what does it mean?" asked Ethan in an anxious tone.

"It means that the darkness nation is attacking the ice tribe and the war has begun. We are all in grave danger. They will come after me and all of you to stop us from saving the world, so we need to train you all up."

As these words came out of Sosoka's mouth, Phillip swooped down and transformed back into a human.

"This is bad. Daniel has taken this too far. I never knew it would come to this. The world is no longer a peaceful place. As Sosoka said, the war has truly begun. So who wants to have a try?"

No hands flew up but one and that one was Robert's.

"No, Rob. It's too dangerous for you. You are sick," snapped Phillip.

"No, I can do it." And so he limped out of bed and stood in front of Sosoka.

"Well, Phillip, you can't stop him learning. You can only build him up."

"I suppose you're right," sighed Phillip.

"So what do I have to do?" asked Robert.

"Well there don't seem to be any creatures in this desolate place," whispered Sosoka. "Well except one the polaripper."

"No, Robert, you can't take this. It's too dangerous," protested Phillip.

"No I believe, so all you have to do, Robert is you have to go up to that skull-crushing beast and display your ice to it. Easy, huh?"

So Robert limped up the ice on a journey to find a polaripper.

The journey was long and hard but Robert finally found a polaripper herd. All were grunting and making odd noises but they seemed different to the ones to the north.

These were much weirder because some of them were red and purple and were attacking the white and blue ones. There they were.

The darkness nation was corrupting the polarippers and were possessing them to attack the others. "This must be the doing of some special and rare darkness creature,"

Robert thought to himself. And then he saw it-the beast that was obviously a person working for Daniel and trying to possess them. It was the only ghosterock left on the planet and it was right in front of him.

He would have to do it even though he knew he would regret it later. So Robert snuck a little bit closer and closer until he was mere meters away from the polarippers. There was only one left. If he had to do it, now was the time and he jumped. Robert felt a jolt of pain and yelped. He had knocked into the baby polaripper and he had sent it flying. They crashed into an iceberg and Robert had broken his arm. He could barely move but he had to, he just had to. So he presented his ice in front of it and he turned shiny white with blue crystals.

Robert morphed into his gigantic bear with crystals for nails and fur as white as snow.

Suddenly there was a shrill, high-pitched call and he heard multiple sounds. The next thing he knew, he was pinned to the ground. Purple claws were digging into his nails and blood was trickling down the side of his neck. He knew immediately with one mournful glance at the now morphing back into a human that he was, after all as Phillip said, in grave danger.

For the man who was now standing up was his brother's second-in-command, Wolfarr. He wielded a long thick black, red and purple rapier and he was swinging it rather dangerously around Robert's head. Then with a great whoosh, he slammed it into the snow and the ice turned rapidly from pure white into dark purple and red veins. Robert was forced to morph back, his neck still bleeding alarmingly. "Well, well what do we have here boys? Looks like the catch of the day."

"Wolfarr, let me go," persisted Robert.

"No way you young lad. Why, wait a minute. Aren't you one of Sosoka's lackeys?"

"I prefer to call myself an adept," Robert replied.

Robert's statement was answered by tumultuous howls of laughter. "Yeah, yeah call it what ever you want you little prat" and through his laughter, Wolfarr grabbed his rapier and dragged it across Robert's chest. His chest was searing with agony.

"What do you want with me?" demanded Robert.

"Well, since you're one of Sosoka's little twits, I'm wondering: should I kill you or should I take you to the master? I think I'll take you to the master. You can talk to each other - you know 'brother to brother'."

The journey was long and hard, but each day of the immense trek the thought of meeting his brother nearly a year after they broke into separate paths almost scared him. He knew from one of his occasional trips to the archives, that scattered around the planet were extremely powerful and dangerous weapons regarding a specific element. But the thing that scared Robert most was what his brother was going to do to him. He was in such agony. He was chained up and had a huge scar across his chest and his arm was broken and hadn't been bandaged or even looked at. And every day the people poking him with electrical

spears would come up with a different joke about him and would jeer so much that Wolfarr had to tell them to put a cork in it.

CHAPTER TWO

FACE TO- FACE

It was snowing and he, Robert - unlike the wolves and hyenas - did not have a coat of fur and was still in the torn clothes from days before. He had no shoes because they had made him take them off. He was starving. He had not eaten for a week. He didn't see the point of going to his brother and being tortured after what he had just been through, but Wolfarr persisted in watching him suffer more.

Once they arrived at Daniel's base they had to go down a long dark chamber in complete darkness.

As they entered the room, the air turned even icier and more thin than before. In the centre of the room there lay a huge spiked black chair with overlarge shackles. Wolfarr chained Robert up and a shrill, evil, hair-raising cackle was coming from a cloaked figure in the corner of the room.

Wolfarr looked utterly petrified and was quivering from head to toe. Every hair on his body seemed to be raised.

As Robert glanced behind him, he saw that the black figure was no longer there. But he felt the hairs on the back of his neck raise and it felt almost as if someone was behind him. No, it couldn't be because Wolfarr and the other guards had left ages ago. Robert risked a peer over his shoulder. The maniacal laughter began again and he saw to his horror that there was a man behind him. It was Daniel. "Daniel, what are you trying to prove by this?"

"Why, nothing," whispered a cold and unforgiving voice. "I have nothing to prove to anyone. I am simply just trying to wreak havoc on the planet. To say the least, I'm planning a full-scale war and while everyone is occupied with that, I will make my way over to the northern electric base and find the first part of the puzzle."

"Wait, Daniel. What puzzle?"

"One so ancient and powerful it can tear continents apart in mere minutes. I am talking about the battle armer of Xelious."

"No, you must be insane to think of doing such a thing! It makes me wonder how you were once my brother. We would play together with Peter."

"Yes, but then we had a big row and we split up different ways. But Peter and I carried on fighting and it lead to us trying to kill each other and eventually one of us was successful."

"No, you didn't. You wouldn't."

"I did," snarled Daniel. "Wolfarr! Get your insolent troops down here immediately!"

"What do you want from me?" Robert asked as he heard the pitter patter of many feet come rushing down the flight of extraordinarily long and never-ending stairs.

"Yes, sir!" he heard them say, but he couldn't see them because his neck was strapped so that his head pointed upwards in a very awkward position.

The men circled him and he felt his heart in his throat. They were obviously going to kill him there was no question about it. What was he going to do? Then a thought occurred to him: what if he froze the room? But no, it was too silly but if only there was a way. He heard the voice of his brother ordering the soldiers around and suddenly he felt relief in his neck. He was no longer bound to the chair. He was being walked, but he had no idea where.

It felt like Wolfarr had been jabbing the spear into Robert's back and forcing him to go faster. But they finally arrived at a place they called the cooker. Wolfarr had been taunting him about how they were going to cook him alive and the whole time he thought he had been bluffing. But now he saw the cooker cell in person he felt a drop of sweat drop down his cheek. The heat was immense. It was hotter than anything he had felt in his life and he was only on the outside.

He was shoved into the cooker and it was like a wave of invisible lava touching his face and patronizing him. He had been in there for five hours or so, and then a guard came to deliver his six o'clock dinner. But as he slotted the tray through the door, he noticed there was a note...

He picked up the note and unfolded it. It read:

Dear Robert I wrote this to tell you that I knew you wouldn't and couldn't resist the penetrating urge to learn the art of magic. I wrote to tell you that I knew you and your siblings would also eventually discover magic and meet up with Sosoka.

No way! It can't be Peter knew all along about magic and wrote to him before his death he hadn't understood the P.S bit or the ending but the rest was pretty clear to him, he must stop Daniel!

He entered a chamber and it was made of stone with spikes on the walls and it was dimly lit. He found many books on shelves and when he was walking past a particularly smelly shelf a book fell and hit his head it had a funny title: breaking the walls. He sat down and read the first thirty or so when he looked up and saw on the clock that it was midnight.

He heard odd banging, roaring and howling coming from upstairs. He climbed the flight of stairs to find that the only thing in the room was a glowing sphere with swirling purple smoke in it.

Then there came the howling then there was silence. Then the orb stopped swirling and Daniel reappeared grinning from ear to ear and morphed...

His spine was clicking, his head sprouting horns, and a tail was growing and his skin was becoming purple, black and dark blue. He was on all fours and his voice was irregularly deep.

His words were, "As delighted as I am to see you here, you have interrupted my - how shall I put it? - training. I'll let you scurry back to Sosoka but tell your siblings that they have no idea what's headed your way. To put it simply-"hell." The next few years are going to be very hard on you indeed. Now go along hurry back home to your friends but remember hell."

"No" whispered Robert.

"Excuse me" said Daniel.

I said no, what were you doing in there.

Fixing Wolfarr little one.

Daniel you're insane.

Daniel yelled "outrageous! You will address me as my proper name lord Vanquish. And if it's a fight you want it's a fight you're going to get".

"Fine" Robert said ignorantly.

APPENDIX 9: Luke's unedited narrative *"The Escape"*

The Escape

She turned to him. They've found us we're trapped, there's no hope.

They were in a room with no light and Alexa had no idea where they were but she suspected Chicago.

"Les", she said. Yea he grunted.

We have been running for days on end there is no hope and you know it she said.

"Yes, I know but I refuse to believe it that's what keeps me moving forward" he replied.

Alexa was from Washington D.C and Les was from somewhere in New York. He said the way to his house was you walk west until you realise your stuff is missing. She didn't want to go to his house. They were being chased around America by the vampire horde. Les had the strength of 100 men and Alexa had the speed of a cheetah.

"The vampires are about to break through the door" Les yelled. At that moment they heard the door cracking and at that moment the door hinges must have been screaming with pressure Alexa thought to herself.

"Brace" Les yelled.

The vampires broke down the door.

"What are we... hiss... going to do.... Hiss...Oh, stop interrupting me vampire!"

"We have to open the portal" came Les's voice but before he could continue a vampire came up behind him and sunk its fangs into his neck.

He turned to her and said "run!"

She did as she was told but as she looked back she saw him struggling but the virus was too strong. He was paling and his eyes were turning red. She ran. She looked back now and his hair was becoming as black as the shadow of a raven.

She remembered what he had said so she ran and ran in circles and then the portal opened. The vampires were sucked inside including Les. She dived in. Immediately the world was still the world was black and white and there was no life. She saw Les lying on the floor motionless. She knew it was time. She ran around him turning them both into spirits...

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